

BLACK MARKET BABY



Renée Clarke

Black Market Baby
An Adopted Woman's Journey

by

Renee Clarke

"The gravest responsibility in life isto bring a child into the world." ¹

"This poor child is motherless, and there's not one thing worse in this world than being motherless."²

"The woman's natural instinct to keep and care for her young is not strong enough to stand against society's condemnation and punishment for bearing a child out of wedlock, a child called 'illegitimate.' The father of such a child assumes no responsibility and our society makes no demands upon him. It is the child who bears alone the total burden of his illegitimate birth. His best hope is adoption." ³

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ISBN: 0-933294-06-9

This is a true story. However all the names and certain details have been changed to protect the privacy of those involved.

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DEDICATION

For my three daughters: This story of my life with glimpses into my heritage picked up in my aura, the irises of my eyes and akashic records is all that I know of my ancestry" my roots were torn leaving behind forever, a full lineage. My life becomes your genealogy, your family tree, and from me you must piece together who came before because I am them, the blood that ran in their veins runs in mine. Those grandparents, great-grandparents and great-great-grandparents have given to me as I have given to you, the thread of life for you to carry on in your children and them in theirs.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have come finally to appreciate my four parents, two who brought me into this world and two who raised me.

I am grateful to my daughter Elizabeth for her compassion, understanding and critical reading of the manuscript, for her many wonderful poems and her devoted persistence in our hiking plans. She has pushed for a strong relationship, questioning, not letting things go, and has made me see her side of us, and allowed me to write about her pain as well. I believe that because of her tenacity I have matured as a mother.

To my friend and partner of thirty-five years and now husband, Steve, who has supported my writing over the years, who has read everything I have ever written and been courageously critical, I give my thanks. His careful reading and rereading of each manuscript, valuable suggestions, editing skills, emotional support, and patience when I seemed far away in the never-never land of adoption ville, for these I am eternally grateful.

I am most grateful to my friend of thirty years, Bonnie K., who edited the manuscript. This book would not have been finished without her. Her wise editing advice, helpful criticism and sensitivity for my words and thoughts, helped me examine my emotions and what I really wanted to say.

My thanks to Dan Frank Kuehn for reformatting the manuscript for printing. To all those people who have studied and written about adoption, in an effort to make clear our dilemma and bring to light the injustices of the system, I am thankful.

INTRODUCTION

I wrote this book in an attempt to deal with my adoption and the trauma of divorce, to get an overview of my life, to set the record straight from my point of view and to give my daughters an inheritance. For fifty years I have denied my adoption and started to talk about it only when I returned to Canada, the country where I was born. I was always under the illusion that I had grown up in a loving family and that my upbringing was normal.

I have labored to remember childhood events. Letters I had written to my parents and my children's letters to me have helped in the recollection. I have tried to rebuild my life and then to extract those events which contributed most to my identity. Historical data has helped to weave a tapestry of the times into which I was born and raised, meaningful in the development of my consciousness. I have read numerous books, talked to many people and realized that however we try to understand what it is to be adopted, it is not easily handled nor has it been satisfactorily dealt with for most of us adoptees.

The Civil Rights Movement in the 1960's, initiated by racial minorities, had a broad effect on other minority groups as well, one of which was adoptees. We, as well as our children and all generations yet to come, have been deprived of the right to know our origins. Why? I have not found a substantial reason for this rule.

I wanted to face my adoption head-on and get a clearer picture of who I am, which would tell me who my birth parents were. Until we adoptees face who we are, we live in a dream.

"Through the 1940's there were fewer children available for adoption and independent adoptions flourished, with many high-priced 'black-market' operations taking advantage of desperate childless couples. Obviously, no counseling or education were available to these adoptive families. This was also true in the large numbers of secret intra-family adoptions which continued into the 1940's. In these cases, in order to hide an illegitimate birth, a relative would take the child and raise him/her, with the origin being concealed. During this same era, when agencies arranged non-relative adoptions, they often advised the parents against disclosing the adoptive status to the child and to treat him/her as if he/she were their natural born." ¹

*"What matters is what you do in this world, not how you come into it."*²

PREFACE

September 1, 1939: Germany invaded Poland. Two days later both Great Britain and France declared war on Germany. On September 10, Canada entered the war. Prime Minister Mackenzie King reassured the country there would be no conscription. By the end of that month, sixty thousand men across Canada volunteered.

"Many who had fought in the 1914-18 war watched their sons march off." ³

I was conceived in February of 1940, five months after WW II had started. During my second month of growth in utero, the German armies invaded Denmark, Norway, Holland, Belgium and France. The near capture of the entire British Expeditionary Force at Dunkirk on the northern coast of France transformed the war. A few days later France fell and Charles DeGaulle escaped to London. On June 10, fascist Italy joined forces with Germany and Italian citizens living in Canada and Canadians of Italian origin suspected of being fascists were arrested.

As Germany intensified its air attacks on Britain, Canadian munition supplies became essential and factories stepped up their production. Air training and aircraft manufacture were expanded to aid Britain against the German Luftwaffe. A large number of women entered the work force. Sugar, meat, butter and milk rationing began in order to ensure adequate supplies for the troops.



I was growing in my mother's womb during the summer when the Atlantic Ferry Service came into being and bombers built in the United States were flown to Montreal, Quebec, and from there made the hazardous crossing to Britain.

Although the United States remained neutral along with the Soviet Union, it helped Britain by providing fifty overage destroyers and started its first peacetime draft. Mackenzie King was re-elected as prime minister. The Ogdensburg Agreement, drafted on August 18, 1940, pledged the United States to defend Canada from invaders. This contract marked a shift from Canada's traditional alliance with Britain to a recognition of an involvement with its neighbor, the United States.

These were the circumstances of the world into which I was born.

HELPLESS

In the fall of 1940 when the leaves covered the sidewalks and gutters of the tree-lined streets, a dark sedan pulled up and parked in front of 201 St. Joseph Boulevard West in Montreal. Staircases lined the outside of the three-story buildings and gold leaf writing reflected on windows against black. There was a chill in the air and the setting sun streaked the red and gold of autumn.

A man and a woman sat in the front seat. A hat covered her short wavy brown hair. He was agitated and she kept looking back where her pregnant daughter, hair messy, clothes soiled, was writhing in pain. People on the stairs, relatives, friends of the car's occupants, approached the vehicle, then turned back. They seemed scattered. The door of the building opened and closed. The girl in the back seat was scared, her mother distraught. Nobody seemed to know what to do.

The doctor in blue appeared at the entrance at the top of the stairs and for a moment the girl and her mother were stuck in the doorway. "This is not the way I'd have it done," said the mother, disgustedly. "If she were married ... but she's not. It seems like he might be a reputable businessman but my daughter won't talk."

The girl passed a radiator in the narrow hallway and was hesitant about going into the room. There was some commotion around the doorway, nurses going in and out, so many doors opening and closing and people rushing around. She simply wanted to get it over with. She was seventeen.

Nervous and confused, she finally found herself in a small white room with tiled green floor and indentations in the walls that housed high windows. There were people around her. Nobody was holding her hand. She heard mumbling. She could feel her hands but the rest was floating. Suddenly the baby was out ... messy ... she could see feet ... just feet ... and a big round clock, 6:10 a.m.

I looked down at my mother. Her legs were in the stirrups. Her face was like mine. She had brown hair and a big belly.

People with masks on ... a lot of whispering ... the baby was gone. No sounds. Something was uncomfortable ... hands ... wrists ... something was going on in the other room. There were two rooms separated by a doorway.

Picking up and changing hands. Handed around. From side to side, legs are kicking. Muffled sounds. They're wheeling me away. Hollow sounds. There was too much space around me. I'm stuck in space. There's a huge vastness around me. My mother is in the other room. They're working on her and I'm left here. Two people around her are calming her down. There's some kind of disruption. It doesn't feel good. She knows how she's feeling. She doesn't

seem to have anything to say except the figures around her are calming her down. I don't think she knew they were going to take me away from her. This wasn't her decision. It was his.

There's some kind of ... not an argument but something's going on in that room around her. I'm just alone ... still ... something happened in my heart.

There was much movement in the hallway, angry words, some- body shoved against the wall, a small cry, a door slammed and then quiet. A car door closed. The motor started and its roar faded as it disappeared down the tree-lined street. The leaves were falling quietly and the setting sun streaked the red and gold of autumn.

Hypnosis session, August 12, 1992, Boulder, Colorado



A friend of the adoptive family brought the newborn to their home at the corner of Rachel around the block from Fletcher's Field, the "traditional park and playground of the city's less affluent, the downtown Jews of St. Urbain Street, Esplanade and St. Dominique." ¹ At this time anti-Semitism in Quebec was at its height.

The birth certificate read: "The undersigned certifies that Renee Rosenberg, daughter of Myer Rosenberg, merchant, and Esther Rubin, his wife, of the Congregation Chevra Shaas, Province of Quebec, was born on the 27th day of October, one thousand nine hundred and forty, and baptized on the second of November 1940. Signed - S. Gerhuni." There was a handwritten file number, #9216, at the top left hand corner above the seal of the Superior Court of the Province of Quebec.

There were no other papers. With an exchange of monies, people became parents, illegalities turned legal and an adoption was consummated. A torn bond, an irrevocable trauma and nobody cared. A doctor, nurse, lawyer, judge and rabbi became a little richer, the birth mother got rid of her child, the birth father got rid of his responsibilities, the adoptive parents got what they couldn't manage to get on their own and the baby was lost somewhere in between.

And so began the life of this soul. No history, no ties, no strings attached. And now fifty-plus years later, the adoptive parents dead, the birth mother still wondering what ever happened to her baby, the birth father, who knows, might be wondering too or has completely forgotten or has never known, and the infant, now a full-grown woman with three children of her own, was trying in vain to search for her real mother, to find out who she was, her roots, her history ... still trying to imagine what it would have been like to have a real mother's arms to cry in, still trying to see her mother's image in the face in the mirror, wishing that someday the telephone would ring and that call would come.

Your adoptive father was the one who initiated it, brought you home and adopted you. Whether you were a child from another relationship that he had, or a friend came to him and he wanted to help her, in either case another woman was involved and it didn't sit well with

your adoptive mother. You symbolized something she couldn't deal with. That explains a lot of the disgruntlement and difficulty that she has given you. That has to do with her own sense of rejection and her own fears.

Psychic reading, November 3, 1983 by Mitra

"Women, if they love children at all, can love almost any child. Thus when a baby is placed in her arms for her own she may or may not feel a rush of innate instincts. She may feel a vague fear, even panic, which is not dispelled when her daily life is disturbed by a demanding baby. She who slept the whole night through now finds herself waked by an importunate cry, to which she must respond. She may wonder why she ever gave up her placid existence in order to have a child another woman bore. If so, let her take heart. These are natural feelings, and ephemeral. As the child becomes real to her - a personality delightful though sometimes troublesome - he becomes her own. She forgets that she did not bear him. She believes that she recognizes in him similarities to her own family or to her husband's, and she rejoices when someone says the child looks like one or both parents. She compares her child to other children and finds him superior in all important ways. She becomes, in short, a full-fledged mother." :

A French-Catholic nurse was hired to care for me while my new mother watched and wondered whether she was happy about the whole affair. They had been trying for ten years. Had all the tests. Nothing happened. He blamed her. She blamed him. Then this opportunity came along.

It was wartime. *"As shortages grew, rationing spread to items ranging from meat and butter to oil and gas."* ³ We lived on a busy street where the milkman delivered milk from Borden's Dairy in a horse-drawn wagon. My mother paid with her books of ration tickets.

Our flat was on the ground floor of an older three-story building. The upper floors had balconies with ornate, wrought-iron railings. Three pale-green painted wooden doors with filigree-framed windows led to each apartment. Ours opened to a small closed vestibule, then to a long narrow hallway with a deep red carpet covering its length.

The first room on the left, with a large window that looked onto the street and bus stop, was mine. As I lay in bed trying to sleep I could overhear the conversations from people waiting for the bus. Heavy maple twin beds and a dresser filled most of the space in the front part of the room, separated at one time from the back by beautiful French doors. My bookcases, a small table and chairs, a cedar chest and my extensive doll collection now took up the space where my mother's baby grand piano once stood. A cupboard full of clothes occupied the far corner. When I was added to the family my parents opened a children's shop next to their well-established lingerie store. Venetian blinds cast crawling lines of light on the ceiling and walls when cars passed at night.

Down the hallway to the right was a small room where my maternal grand- mother slept when

she was ill. The hallway opened to a living room where we spent our evenings listening to my mother play the piano. A doorway led to my parents' room and another, to a small bathroom, a walk-in pantry, and the kitchen which opened to a back porch and paved oval courtyard that sloped ever so slightly to a drain in the middle. Our porch was connected to the other two floors by a closed, musty circular staircase which was rarely used. A tall wooden fence separated our yard from the lane behind. Across the yard a replica of our building housed, on the top floor, a family with whom we were friends, a grandmother and her two spinster daughters. The youngest, Fanny, babysat for me.

🌿 1941 🌿

Penicillin was discovered. Greta Garbo made her last feature film. In Canada more than 250,000 men and about 2000 women had entered the army.

In Poland thousands of Jews were being deported from the Warsaw and Lodz ghettos to death camps, the Chelmo and Auschwitz gas chambers. "Between 1933 and 1945 Canada had the worst record of all the western democracies in providing sanctuary to Jewish refugees fleeing the scourge of the Nazis. However, the majority of Canadians preferred almost any type of immigrant - including Germans - to Jews. It was in Quebec that the Jew seemed most threatened. Both the Roman Catholic Church and its lay allies in the French-Canadian nationalist movement were aggressively anti-Jewish."

On the 7th of December, just after I turned one, the Japanese air force bombed Pearl Harbor and America was finally drawn into the war. Four days after the attack, Hitler, too, declared war on the United States. After Pearl Harbor, Canada joined Britain and the United States in declaring war on Japan.

🌿 1942 🌿

I remember my father boasting they had the best of care for me when I was a baby - a nurse, rather than my mother, took care of my needs. Was my mother incapable of nurturing me?

We were still on milk rations. My parents listened eagerly to the radio every evening for news of the war. Most days my mother worked alongside my father in their store leaving me with my grandmother. She was a little woman, soft, warm and gentle, who wore her snow-white hair pulled back in a bun held in place by large, delicate, wire hairpins. She was blind and taught me how to draw. Holding a crayon in her right hand and following the edge of the paper with her left, she drew borders of different colors trying not to cross the lines and got upset when she did.

One day while she was talking with the neighbors across the street and I was playing on the sidewalk, a truck suddenly jumped the curb and raced towards me. She rushed out and grabbed me, pulling me to safety. How did she do that? She wasn't born blind and no one knew how she became blind.

🕊 1943 🕊

It was during this year that the tide of the battle turned. The Russians won the War of Stalingrad and the German nation reverted to a defensive position.

I was only three when, standing on my little red wooden chair in the kitchen, I lost my balance and fell onto the end of a miniature broomstick. The uvula, the piece of skin that hangs at the back of the throat, was ripped by the broom handle. My father rushed home from work and as he held a flashlight, the doctor performed surgery while I lay on the kitchen table. What was going on in our lives that could have unconsciously caused that accident? Did I need attention from my mother and create the incident in order to get it? Was I a thorn in her side even then, as she told me years later?

🕊 1944 🕊

June 6, D-Day, one million troops poured onto Normandy beaches while General Patton's tanks thundered across France driving the Germans back. The Allies retook Paris while the Canadians freed Dieppe and the channel ports of France and Belgium. Holland and the Netherlands were liberated. In the Philippines MacArthur returned in triumph. Roosevelt clobbered Thomas E. Dewey and became the only President ever elected four times. Maurice Duplessis returned as premier of Quebec. Mackenzie King was re-elected as Canada's Prime Minister. The Family Allowance Act, also known as the Baby Bonus, paid all Canadian mothers with children under sixteen a monthly sum of \$5-\$7.

An incident, sure to leave a scar on my sensitive developing psyche, occurred when I was four years old. It was summer and I was sitting on my front doorstep with two girlfriends when a man stopped on his bike and offered us a dollar if one of us would go with him. My friends didn't budge but I got up and followed him down and across the street where we entered an apartment building. In the hallway next to the stairs he pulled down my pants and fondled me, asking if I liked it. I remember not moving and just looking at him. There was a faint feeling of pleasure where he touched me. I don't recall anything after that, how I was found or if I was punished. But I have always been puzzled as to why I went with him because my parents had told me never to go with strangers.

Perhaps following that man was for me acting out - a form of searching ... to find my missing part ... searching for my real mother or father. Instead of running away, maybe I was running to ...

Or perhaps unconsciously the exchange of money was familiar since I knew, even at that young age, I had been bought and paid for. Something triggered this response to get up and go and I was helpless. This feeling of helplessness has been an issue of major importance all through my life.

Maybe I couldn't say no to him as I couldn't say no to my adoptive parents because they might

give me back. They might think me bad or selfish. In my need for approval saying no was too dangerous. I grew up not being able to assert myself and make my feelings known. I wasn't free to be myself and did things that I didn't want to do. This built up much anger and resentment in me.

Your biological mother was helpless as to whether she should keep you or not. Then you were adopted into a home with a mother who was creating a feeling of helplessness for you because she didn't know how to deal with you and you were helpless to do anything about it. Your way of coping was not to deal with it - to move away into the deeper levels of your unconscious.

Psychic Reading, 1983, by Mitra

"The age of reason begins at seven. A legitimate sense of morality is not even possible before this." ⁵



I don't ever remember putting up a fuss when my parents went out in the evenings because Fanny came to babysit. She was short, round and small with an old-lady-like smell of fermented vegetables and she kept her hair tightly wound up in a roll around the back of her neck with hairpins to hold it in place. She taught me to knit. I loved going through her leftover balls of yarn from baby clothes she had made for her customers, lining her lap with tissue paper so that the tiny sweaters, booties and hats wouldn't get soiled. When I dropped a stitch and became impatient or nasty, she would calmly pick it up, tolerating my bad behavior. I could be mean to her more easily because of her timidity than to my mother who was far more forbidding and disagreeable.

A month before I turned five I started kindergarten in a small one-room building close to the public school a block away from our house. It was under the care of an austere woman named Miss Lawson. My mother left me at the large, double-doored entrance where a set of twins kicked and screamed when their mother attempted to leave. I didn't understand what the commotion was all about. Didn't they want to go to school? Why were they so afraid? Why wasn't I? Or was I ... but fearful of my feelings, therefore putting on a brave face, the beginnings of a necessary stoicism that would encumber my life and cause numerous accidents.

I remember only one incident in that room aside from my fascination for the art supply cupboard. There was a puddle on the floor under the chair of a boy who sat next to me. Miss Lawson was extremely displeased, picking him up by the shirt collar and steering him out of the room. He was very frightened and terribly embarrassed. I was glad it wasn't me but was afraid for him. We had to raise our hands to go to the bathroom but sometimes there were accidents. She should have been more understanding. This was our first time in school, a poor introduction to the years we were to spend in those institutions.

THROUGH A CHILD'S EYES

✎ 1945 ✎

Germany surrendered in May. "On August 6, 1945 the world's first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, a Japanese city of 300,000. Seventy-eight thousand people were killed instantly, 70,000 were injured and 10,000 others were never 1 found."¹ "Five days later another atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, killing 40,000 people instantly and wounding another 40,000 in the city of 250,000. The following day Japan surrendered"²

"From the barren wooded platform, I surveyed the area of the atomic bomb explosion. As far as the eye could see, I could make out fields of burned ashes, twisted steel structures, and graves containing untold souls and spirits. There was no sign of life: no people, no animals, no birds singing. Silence prevailed. I wondered why the human mind and human society could give rise to such tragic things under this clear blue sky."³

"The Second World War had ended, heralding the Atomic Age. 1,086,343 Canadian men and women had served in the armed forces. 96,456 were killed, wounded or had died in service."⁴

"After the war had ended the United Nations was born."⁵

My maternal grandfather, a tall man with grey hair and an air of awareness about him, sewed clothes for my favorite dolls, having been a tailor in Russia. At bedtime he would unfold a metal card table chair, place it beside my bed and tell me a story, starting with the Jewish words "a mul is gevain" which meant "once upon a time." I loved him and he was probably the only one that could get me to go to bed since I was quite a handful and mostly got my own way.

We spent summers in a small community on the south shore of Lake St. Louis, about an hour's drive from Montreal where the Great Lakes Waterway passed, and my grandparents stayed with us for part of the season. When I was four or five years old, my grandfather and I had gone swimming and on the way back to our cottage, I was holding his hand, having to reach up to him, and could see something dangling between his legs under his bathing suit, one of those old-fashioned loose things. Fascinated, I stared at this appendage. Had I been a bit taller I could not have seen it and nobody else could. That may have been the first time I realized there was a difference between boys and girls. Although surely I was curious, I didn't feel free to ask about this strange occurrence. Sex must have been a formidable subject to my parents and the strangeness I felt at such a young age was their ill-at-ease.

In the wintertime my friends and I made angels in the snow and seats in the high banks that lined the streets. While "ball and jacks" were great in the summer, smokiest or marbles were best in the snow. I kept mine in a small purple Seagram's sack with the name "Crown Royal"

embroidered in gold which used to hold a bottle of rye, my father's favorite libation. Some I would never trade - glassy, smooth crystals, floating colored pieces encased in transparent greens and blues, bright reds and oranges, nebulous nuggets, obscure orbs of black and brown, I loved them all. We aimed for a thumb-print in the snow while hitting each others' out of the way. Hours passed while mittens frosted, cheeks turned red and noses ran.

Sledding and tobogganing on Mt. Royal, a mountain in the middle of Montreal, filled the weekends and skating was more fun with music and lights in the evenings. Some Sundays ended with Chicken-in-the-Basket at Miss Montreal, a family-type restaurant on the strip. We often took my friend Allan along if he was visiting his grandmother and aunts who lived on the top floor of the building across the courtyard. On the way home listening to Charlie McCarthy and Edgar Bergen on the radio kept us in the car parked in front of our house until the program was over.

Most Sundays found us at my paternal grandparents' house in Lower Montreal. My grandfather, famous for his sour pickles made in large wooden barrels in the dark, musty, earthen-floored cellar, was a small, quiet, introverted man who retired to some inconspicuous corner whenever family was around. My grandmother, a heavy, happy matriarch who ran her household, loved having me sleep over when my parents would agree. Because of her heart condition she slept propped up on pillows and at any sign of trouble, it was her favorite son, my father, who would race to her house to give her oxygen. Her kitchen was always steamy with piles of potatoes baking in the wood stove, a huge pot of borscht with marrow bones on top and that's what everybody who visited ate along with my grandfather's sour dills. On the way home it was a treat to stop at Lafontaine Park to watch the fantastic fountains of dazzling, dancing waters that changed configuration and color and, if we were early enough, a visit to the Midgets' Palace to see the little people.

One evening we arrived home to find that a burglar had broken the pantry window, stepped into a freshly baked cake my mother had placed on the washing machine and left doughy footprints all over the floor. We must have disturbed him because the tracks didn't get very far and nothing was missing. Being so remote from my parents' room I pleaded to be allowed to sleep with them that night but my father insisted I get used to sleeping alone. I couldn't understand his reasoning nor his insensitivity when I was so deathly afraid.

At Christmas my mother and I boarded a train for Denver, Colorado, to visit her brother, my uncle, a major in the army who had just returned from the war, his wife and their five children. It took four long days and nights to get there. A huge decorated tree with a profusion of presents stood in the corner of their living room. With my uncle away, my aunt, not being Jewish, had been left to raise their children as Christians. For the few days we were there all I would eat was chicken. I must have been pretty adamant about it because she remarked that her five kids weren't as difficult as I was. Perhaps I felt insecure amongst five blood relatives. I wasn't really one of them and might have overheard something to that effect. Being an only child and thrown into a large family I was not center stage anymore. Or perhaps I just didn't like anything on the dinner table. You can't blame children for being spoiled. They aren't born that way. My mother spoiled me, overcompensating for her guilt and lack of love.

Seven thousand TV sets were sold in the United States as commercial television got off the ground and the country inched back to normalcy. Churchill coined the phrase "Iron Curtain," from the Baltic to the Adriatic, with Russia on one side and the rest of Europe on the other. The start of the Cold War between the East (led by the USSR) and the West (led by the USA), a period of hatred, mistrust and misunderstanding but no actual fighting, continued until 1991 -forty-five years. The first drive-in movie opened in Canada.

When I was six I got scarlet fever - an intimidating illness before penicillin. The doctor came to the house, ordered an ambulance to the shock of my parents, and shipped me off to the Alexandria Hospital for contagious diseases. When they came to visit, they had to stand outside the glass cubicle I was in. I was once again alone, securely sealed away, scared but complacent, not making any demands. Soon after, my tonsils and one adenoid were carelessly plucked while my mother, who was having something done, and I shared a room at the Royal Victoria Hospital. We created quite a sensation on the floor. Everybody dropped in to see the mother/daughter team. But my mother and I never really got along. She was critical of everything I did, always threatening to "wait until your father comes home" to straighten things out. His shaving strop behind the bathroom door was used a few times on my bottom and I secretly felt that this pleased her. What truly pleased her was playing the piano. Almost every evening my father and I listened to Chopin, Liszt, Beethoven, Mozart, Haydn and Bach. He didn't really seem interested but if I uttered a word he quickly signaled for me to be quiet. He was massaging her ego, kowtowing to her need to feel important, worthy, wanted, the center of attention, all of which made me uneasy. Why did he have to act this way - always catering to her? People normally overact out of guilt and it was only later that I realized he was covering something up.

Your father was a proud man, easy-going, pleasant and much more balanced than your mother, in a better space psychologically than her. He had a great deal of compassion for her. Were he born of our generation, he never would have stayed with her. In your father there was a guilt thing and there's an assumption that because of his background, this was the way it had to be for him as a man. He was always going to have to deal with a woman who was nasty because he really wasn't good enough. That had to have something to do with the attitude his mother had toward him as a child.

Psychic Reading, 1983, by Mitra

Before you came on the scene your mother got more attention. It wasn't her idea to get you but she went along with it. She got all the drudge work and so there was a real resentment there. Your father played with you a lot when you were young but he wasn't into changing diapers. He thought you were wonderful. Their relationship even before you came along was tense. Your mother didn't feel she was getting enough attention and the way she tried to get it pushed him away. For her there was a real fear of you doing the wrong thing and her getting blamed, that somehow she'd failed. Your father helped with this fear. "What do you mean you don't know

why she's crying?" There was a part of her that felt she couldn't be as good a mother because she didn't give birth to you. And so that built up into resentment. It's not that she didn't love you, she had no idea how to express it. And then you pulling away more and more because you felt her resentment and lack of love.

Psychic Reading, 1985, by Joy

"The father who was head of the family in the 1940's and 50's often gave up power, willingly, in the nursery. These men were 'dominated' or 'weak' on the home-front and tended to duck any unpleasantness between mother and daughter, by keeping a low profile within the family. In their passiveness they nevertheless often created emotional hurricanes. In frustrated response, their wives frequently vented their feelings of redundancy onto the only people over whom they were allowed total control: their children, especially their daughters. And so their daughters often felt bereft of any parental protection. If these women perceived that their daughters garnered too much of his charmed attention, the daughter was in for a bumpy ride."

Power was important to this woman. She wanted to be in control. There was a sense of pride in her that she had this man who was going to take care of her. There was also a sense of pride in him that he could take care of her but that was an illusion because she didn't need to be taken care of. They were playing at it, it wasn't a reality. As far as he was concerned he was being drained. She was afraid of being alone. When one is afraid of something happening that's what they create for themselves. She needed him. He kept her more centered. She was quite a user and could have used some good therapy herself. But that would have taken her toys away and she would have been angry. You turned away from her and basically identified with your father. Your mother had a tremendous amount of self-pity and she used that to get what she wanted in terms of attention and a sense of control over people. One of the reasons you clashed with her was that she saw herself in you, in that you were the orphan in need just as she felt orphaned and needy. And so she identified with you. You were fortunate because you had a father with whom you could have a sense of impact, of rationality and trustworthiness, otherwise you would never be able to relate to men.

Psychic reading, 1983, by Mitra

When my mother went too far and talked about killing herself, my father reluctantly stopped her and in private implored me, "Be good to Ma." If I was nice to her she'd feel better about taking care of me so he could continue what he was doing without interference. I accepted the guilt of causing my mother grief until years later when I found out about his affairs with other women. I remember her frequent complaints and his calling her crazy. When I questioned a cousin about my adoption after both my parents had died, she told me their marriage had been arranged. My mother was older than my father which surprised me because they always said they were the same age. "Who's to know? They came from Russia with no papers," she said. When I asked my father how they met, he said my mother had been engaged to a doctor who was suddenly killed. She was going with his best friend and he, with another woman. They just switched dates and then got married.

I had no privacy at home. My father wouldn't allow me to close the door to my room saying we were a family, had no secrets and therefore no reason to close doors. Not being able to trust himself he projected all his mistrust onto me. The only door I could close, other than the bathroom door, was the one to my closet. If left open that big black hole scared me when I awoke during the night and I'd call for my father who, while I went to the bathroom, would squeeze a glass of fresh orange juice for me. A ritual was established.

✎ 1947 ✎

I was seven years old when wartime rationing came to an end. Princess Elizabeth and Prince Philip were married and we watched their wedding ceremony on television. It was dreamlike with the two of them riding in their royal carriage that looked like Cinderella's coach.

Annie, a Ukrainian woman, cleaned our house and took care of me if I happened to be sick and home from school. She was heavy, with stringy, shoulder-length hair, and teeth widely-spaced with one missing in front. She worked hard, was quite jovial, wouldn't put up with my moods and I liked being with her. She had a young daughter. When we played together I remember becoming cranky and jealous when Annie showed her more attention than me. It didn't matter that they were mother and daughter. All I thought was ... what about me? Craving a mother's attention blinded me to everything else.

During second grade my mother, president of the Home and School Association and interested in creative opportunities for kids even though she had a difficult time relating to me, initiated an art program for children to attend after school, one day a week, free of charge. With the gym floor covered with sheets of paper, paint trays and small containers of water, we could let our imaginations roam unrestricted, creating magical masterpieces of illusive impressions from past lives and present predicaments. I loved art.

After school and some milk and cookies, my friend Judy and I walked to Hebrew School, where the teacher, a man with bad breath, tried desperately, for one hour, to teach us this archaic language, for what reason I didn't know. He was short on patience and used to hit the backs of our hands if we weren't paying attention. Eventually I learned how to read backwards and recite "The Four Questions" at Passover seeders. The songs he sang with gusto, completely forgetting about us, were fun and I remember them to this day. I didn't particularly like going to Hebrew school nor to synagogue but we went because it was the thing to do.

Mello-Rolls (tubular vanilla ice cream in a cone), miniature bags of chips, black hard balls that changed colors as you sucked through the layers, rock candy (crystal chunks linked on a string), dots (drop candy on paper strips), Popsicles and fudgsicles were my favorite sweets; they left my teeth cavitized and caused numerous tortuous trips to the dentist. The building on the corner of Peel and Sherbrooke sent shudders through me, the halls and elevator smelled of decay, and opening the door to the waiting room was hell itself. I never got out with fewer than too many fillings and I was allowed to hold the switch to turn off the drill but never used it because that would just have prolonged the pain. My reward was plaster of Paris figurines of Mickey, Minnie or Donald Duck to take home and paint. I collected many.

Barbara Ann Scott of Ottawa, Ontario, won the Gold Medal in figure skating at the Winter Olympics and I remember seeing her at the Ice Follies. Israel became a nation and was immediately attacked by her Arab neighbors (first Arab-Israeli War). America promptly recognized Israel but Britain and Canada refused to follow their lead. Only after Israel won its first war and Mackenzie King was replaced by Louis St. Laurent did Canada agree to acknowledge the new Jewish state. Mohandas Gandhi, advocate of nonviolence, was assassinated. The government of South Africa began its racist apartheid policy which gave blacks no political rights.

Neither of my parents read books, only newspapers and magazines, yet my mother was adamant about me reading. She taught me that books were precious and not to fold the corners of pages but to use a bookmark. She also expected me to play the piano. I was actually proud that she played since none of my friends' mothers could do anything like that, but I hated to leave my playmates skipping rope to come in to practice. I felt pressured to please her. If only she didn't click her tongue every time I hit a wrong note, I might still be playing today. Elocution lessons were torture. Being terribly shy, I hated to recite on stage. But ballet was different. I loved to dance and the most thrilling of all was going to the ballet. Margot Fonteyn and Rudolf Nureyev in Swan Lake left me spellbound. Giselle, The Nutcracker, Coppelia. We went to every ballet that came to Montreal. My mother always bought a program and read the synopsis to me at the beginning of each act. I cherished and saved these programs for years.

Suddenly the theater lights dimmed, a hush fell over the audience, the conductor stepped up to the podium and the strains of the overture enveloped the room. I held my breath when the footlights lit the deep red velvet curtain that opened, slowly revealing a darkened stage with frozen silhouetted dancers and the magic began. Everything melted away for those few blissful hours. I was the princess, the white swan, who dreamt of being released by her prince and I cried when she flung herself into the lake. I was Sleeping Beauty with the wicked queen as my mother. My father obediently accompanied us and always fell asleep during the performance.

My grandmother died during the summer when I attended camp in the Laurentian Mountains north of Montreal. We had spent a lot of time together and I loved her dearly. Afraid to draw any attention to myself and embarrassed by my feelings, I let her death pass without a reaction from me. My mother cried a lot. But she cried about everything.

My parents rented a cottage in the country along with many of their friends. I was the only kid who went to camp instead. It was a feather in my parents' cap to be able to afford this luxury. Maybe they just wanted to get rid of me. I was a bit apprehensive about going away for six weeks but didn't complain because I was the dutiful daughter - submissive and anxious to please.

Everything I needed was labeled and packed into a steamer trunk. Finally the day arrived

when I was dropped off amongst hundreds of kids, parents and counselors in the parking lot of a shopping center where a long line of buses had gathered. The farewell to families was secondary to the excitement of leaving and I watched the anxious faces of my parents disappear as we pulled away. The counselor on board briefed us on our arrival at camp, where to go and what to do. We sang songs for the hour and a half ride into the northern reaches of the province.

There were eight kids and two counselors to each side of a bunkhouse with two bathrooms and four sinks in the middle room. Wooden shutters, raised and lowered by cords, lined the side walls and the openings were screened to keep out bugs and other winged wildlife of the wilderness. Nothing like home. Chores that changed weekly were explained and assigned. Then we were taken for a walk around the campus. It was all very strange and although some of the girls knew each other from school, most of us were strangers. Some fell into friendships immediately while I, ever insecure and shy, lingered on the sidelines. During the evening homesickness settled in and tears took over their otherwise blithe behavior. I didn't cry. I was used to feeling alien. Unfortunately I was the one still awake long after the others had fallen asleep.

I made friends quickly with my bunkmates and really liked both counselors who, having to replace parents when times got tough, were warm and understanding. I loved arts and crafts most and Sundays when the kitchen was closed and we got to make our own sandwiches. Everybody loved peanut butter and jelly. My mother hated peanut butter so I grew to hate it too. She would make a disgusting face when I even broached the subject. I was used to salmon, chopped egg or tuna but that was not to be found in the camp kitchen. I wanted to love peanut butter. Plain jelly on bread became my staple. Just another element that kept me apart from the group. To this day I do not eat peanut butter although all three of my kids do. What kid doesn't?

I definitely did not feel like one of the bunch. All the kids had Slinks except me. My friends loaned me theirs but it wasn't the same so I wrote home asking for one but it never arrived. Everybody was reading Nancy Drew mysteries. Not me. It wasn't that my mother thought badly of them but there were more important books to read, like the classics. My clothes were different too. Although we had to buy specific camp attire to be worn on special occasions like visiting day, Saturday morning services and something referred to in our packing lists as "Color War," my bunkmates had fancy shirts, pretty slacks and matching hair ribbons as well. It could have been my pervasive subconscious feeling of being different that caused this response because I certainly wasn't treated differently and actually got along easily with everybody, but I felt plain and left out.

Towards the end of the summer while we were enjoying our rest period after lunch, a plane was heard overhead. Everybody rushed out of their cabins to see it circle above the baseball diamond and suddenly drop two bundles. The head counselor was first to reach the spot and while others crowded around, she opened the parcels. We heard loud cheering and could see everyone jumping up and down. Color War had broken out. What was this all about? One bundle was green and the other, brown, with a list assigning every camper and counselor to a team, where and when to report to what. Frenzy prevailed until the leaders of the two teams

read the names and we fell into line behind them at the flagpole. Our bunkhouse was split in half. For the next week all our activities were competitive, one side against the other, racking up points for the final win. It was pretty spectacular but smaller kids like me were intimidated by it all.

Competition made me nervous and making a mistake brought all kinds of horrors. Actually Color War left me cold. Anxiety prevailed as we had to be on time for morning lineup, races, mealtimes, clean-up, no dust on floors, shiny sinks and spotless shelves. Otherwise we would be responsible for the loss of precious points for our team. There was, however, a more exciting aspect to this pastime - writing a team song, a cheer and decorating our side of the dining hall. Creative things were not threatening to me, although I loved watching the thermometer rise when the team scores were posted at the end of each day showing which team was ahead.

At the end of the season a banquet for everybody including parents was held in the dining room which was beautifully decorated with flowers, streamers and artwork from each of the divisions. I won the "Best All-Around Camper" award for my section and received a small silver trophy with my name engraved on it. I was astonished to learn that everybody loved me. My low self-esteem had veiled my virtues leaving me totally unaware of the reality in which I existed. I was eight years old.

Something happened in that year that contributed to my insecurity. My mother found out about an affair my father was having and took her anger out on me. I absorbed her jealousy and rage and stored them in my heart forever. I stumbled upon this information fifty years later while a chiropractor who was doing emotional work with me deduced that at the age of eight I was severely traumatized. The most difficult concepts to change in later years are those of self-esteem, insidious in their initiation and evolution.

I returned to camp for another two summers and remained friends with my bunkmates for years, seeing them infrequently in the city, mostly at birthday parties. It was at one of those gatherings that an incident left an indelible mark on my memory, triggering an emotion to which I was so vulnerable - rejection. Some of the girls had gathered in the birthday girl's bedroom and the rest of us were excluded. Their whispers and giggles behind the closed door left me shattered. When they finally asked me and another girl to join them, the damage had been done. There was nothing going on in the room except little girls' trivialities but I was left out. My real mother left me out, giving me away, as I found out five years later. My adoptive mother left me out of her heart. My girlfriends left me out of that room and those primal, morbid, frightful feelings of rejection were fired up. It left me sad and insecure and feeling like the outcast I thought I was.

Another uncomfortable episode that came up one afternoon while playing cards with my friends was about who we looked like. I felt slightly nervous when they couldn't figure out which parent I resembled. One of the boys, the one whose grandmother lived upstairs from me in the city, came to my rescue by saying he thought I looked like my father. Why was I anxious about this? Perhaps the other kids were and I picked up on their vibes. Or, perhaps, subconsciously I knew, even though I hadn't been told yet, that I was adopted.

During the years before and after I attended camp, and the two remaining weeks in August after camp was over, I spent in the country. My parents and their friends rented summer cottages to escape the city heat and crowds. I was one of fifteen kids who grew up together in this carefree environment. We rode bikes to the old abandoned train station, borrowed our fathers' motor boats and cruised to the island in the middle of the lake where an enigmatic, broken-down cabin sparked our imaginations of murder and mystery. Spin-the-Bottle and Post Office occupied our evenings if we couldn't coax our parents for lifts to the cinema. The old Al-hambra Theater in the next village introduced me to Alfred Hitchcock's *Strangers on a Train*, *Rear Window*, Esther William musicals, *Singin' in the Rain*, *The Greatest Show on Earth* and my love for film was founded. I worshiped Rock Hudson, Alan Ladd, Robert Taylor, Janet Leigh, Tony Curtis, Doris Day, Donald O'Connor, Elizabeth Taylor, Jane Powell, Howard Keel, June Allison, Stewart Granger and Tyrone Power and religiously read the movie magazines at my mother's beauty parlor which she owned for a few years while I was in public school. That's when I got all those permanents so I could have curls like my father. Since I was little I loved running my fingers through his soft curls while sitting on his lap and sucking my thumb. It made me feel secure, that life was warm and gentle and I belonged to somebody.

About twice a week in the early afternoon the familiar clang of a bell signaled the arrival of the ice cream truck and a short run down the dirt lane from our country house to the main road got us a large scoop and a quick chat with neighbors and friends. Wednesday evenings found my mother and me walking along the narrow, winding country road picking berries on the way to meet my father coming from the city to spend the night. We seemed happy together and with him out of the picture we got along more easily. There was no competition. It was just Mom and me.

Self-esteem is like moonlight and sunlight that play on the water. One moment the wave sparkles and the next it creates a shadow or is in shadow. So is the wave going to feel unworthy because it isn't sparkling? One moment we look at ourselves and think we're all aglow and the next, we think we're in the dark and on the outside of things. It's the angle from which we see ourselves. Always take that sense of self-esteem in a very relative way. In this aspect of your consciousness there is some confusion as to your identity, as to who and what you are. Therefore there is confusion as to where your self-esteem is based. And the confusion is that you observed your mother as a confused, neurotic woman who simply did not make any sense. She did not know how to function intelligently and use what she had. She always had to be in a way protected by your father. In terms of your father you made a conscious choice not to be like your mother.

Psychic Reading, 1983, by Mitra

FINDING OUT

✎ 1949 ✎

Newfoundland became the tenth province to join the Canadian Confederation. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO, an international defense alliance, was signed by Canada and the allies in The Hague, Netherlands, to guard Western democracy from communist attack. China and the Soviet Union signed a treaty and Communism was now in control of 40% of the world's population. The Russians exploded their first atomic bomb. Americans were now buying 60,000 television sets. Canada finally granted full recognition to the State of Israel.

I was in fourth grade when my mother wrote this revealing letter:

On behalf of the parents, I would like to express a message of good will to our principal and teachers. Last month a meeting was planned called as a parents Night" and as a parent, I naturally attended. What impressed me greatly was the interest shown by the pupils in preparing their drawings, paintings, and arts and crafts projects so that their parents would see their classrooms and work. I was a very proud parent that night, as were so many others. Whatever we felt, however we appreciated the children's work, we did not express ourselves adequately. We the parents, mostly of European birth and heritage, are very fortunate indeed - fortunate that we are living in Canada and through our democratic way of life, are in the happy position to be part of a Home & School movement which gives us the opportunity to meet with the principal and teachers on a friendly basis, with a common purpose - the education of our children. This opportunity, our parents did not have and we should indeed pause to think and realize how privileged we are to share in their education. This is a festive season, Chanukah and Christmas - each exemplifies tradition and religion, with the simple truth of one God. We should all dedicate ourselves to the spirit of goodwill and tolerance. In keeping with the holiday spirit and on behalf of the members of the Home & School Association it gives me great pleasure to present this radio to the teachers for their rest room. We do hope you will enjoy it in your leisure time.

This intelligent woman, my mother, constantly talked about killing herself. It was always her "nerves" when she came back from her doctor's visits and my father called her high-strung. "Be good to Ma," he repeated time and again after our many fierce fights. How could I "be good to Ma" when he wasn't? He pretended to be good to her most of the time but while making excuses for his wife and begging me not to be like her, "helpless," he made me his accomplice and created a gulf between my mother and me forever.

*Hi wonder if the intensity of that mother's hysteria was not the fruit of a barren womb."*¹

When I was nine I was introduced to sex through a book my mother gave me called *Where Do Babies Come From*. It contained illustrations of a woman's reproductive organs, a baby curled

up in the uterus and the parents living happily ever after with their newborn. My mother didn't say anything and I didn't ask her why I needed to know this at the time. I did look through the pages but never imagined that I came out of a uterus other than hers. Didn't everybody come out of their mummies' tummies? She never told me hers didn't work.

My best friend Judy lived a few doors away with her parents, two sisters, a brother, and grandparents in a roomy, third-story flat. Meals at her house were special, something my mother couldn't understand. They ate everything out of soup bowls and the cutlery was gathered in a glass in the center of the table. At my house we always had soup and salad bowls, dinner plates, and a place setting of cutlery along with a napkin. It might have been the large friendly family scene rather than the table setting that was so appealing - a desire to experience what it was like to grow up with a real family or having been a part of one before being given up.

Judy's mother worked at my parents' clothing store when they needed extra help. Every Friday after school she and I walked to the shop, and my father would treat us to supper at the delicatessen next door. Back at the store we played salesladies with real invoice books while the staff, forced to put up with us, patiently turned a deaf ear. One evening we discovered some boxes of pink, soft rubber falsies that looked just like the real thing. We filled our sweaters with them and walked out onto the floor showing off our newly formed bosoms. The head saleslady chased us through aisles and behind the counters to the stockroom in the rear. Even though she laughed, yielding to our childish mirth, she was quite exasperated. She replaced them, quite firm about our not handling the merchandise, or she would get it from the boss. I, however, could do anything, I was the boss's daughter.

Saturday mornings we attended dance class in the school gymnasium. Because I couldn't live without my friend and her parents couldn't afford ballet lessons, my parents paid for her so that we could be together. Eleanor Ashton, the head of the Canadian Ballet, visited our school to interview students for potential initiates. After performing our rehearsed routines she approached me, ran her hand along my arms, saying "beautiful arms, perfect for the ballet." She asked if I liked to dance and then went off with my teacher in a whispered *tete-a-tete*. Would I and another of the girls be interested in becoming members of the Canadian Junior Ballet? I was so excited to be chosen I wasn't really sure what she meant. Study ballet every day? With a real company? She later explained to my mother what this would entail - classes every day after school in a place quite far from where I lived and a very heavy commitment on my part as well as my mother's. I remember my parents discussing it that evening. "But it's every day after school, Myer, and I have to drive her and wait there until she's finished. It's asking too much." Confused at her reluctance, I couldn't say anything. How I felt wouldn't have made a difference. It was not up to me. My mother declined. I don't remember what feelings I forced out of my heart but I know that I wanted nothing more than to dance.

"The good adoptee is almost selfless in a desire to please. Wanting to fit in at any cost, it will deny its own needs for the sake of others. It senses what is acceptable and what is not and will do anything to avoid confrontation." ²

On Saturday afternoons, along with the neighborhood kids, Judy and I escaped in the antics of Laurel and Hardy, Hopalong Cassidy, Bugs Bunny and Woody Woodpecker in an old church basement. It was always a shock leaving the building to emerge into a harsh sunlit world after having spent those happy, carefree hours in total fantasy.

"Since they have no facts they often turn to fantasy." ³

A visit to the amusement park was very special. It happened once every summer and the long drive to the north end of the island of Montreal seemed like going to another country. My father accompanied me on most of the rides, even if I had a friend along, while my mother, having no interest in joining us, watched anxiously. The roller coaster and Ferris wheel never terrified me as they do now and the funny mirrors that made you look short and fat or tall and skinny always made me laugh. But my favorite was the carousel. Choosing whether to sit on a stationary horse at the edge, a high-backed coach seat, or a moving pony in the center with a bright colored feather on its head was tough. The latter usually won out and as the carousel started, I hung on for dear life as the horses galloped round and round and up and down while I, mesmerized for the next few minutes, dreamed of freedom and floating through fairytale lands. Cotton candy and red taffy apples, although playing havoc with my teeth, rounded out an excellent evening.

When Judy wasn't around I occasionally played with a little, blonde-haired girl named Charna, a few years younger than me. When it was time for her to go home I was sometimes mean and impatient even while helping her on with her boots. Was this evidence of my repressed anger and frustration from my original pain or a reflection of my mother's impatience with me? Aggressive behavior is an expression of rage and a way of taking control. Where did all this anger come from? My mother often vented her anger by throwing pots and pans at me until the kitchen cupboards were empty, while screaming that she couldn't take it anymore. I was terrified as the hallway became cluttered with utensils all the way to my bedroom door. To get away from her I would hide in my clothes closet. What frightened me most was how out of control she was. There was nothing I could do to stop her. I was helpless. When my father returned from work, he too was helpless at this chaotic scene; wondering what I could have done to make her so mad.

It was in fourth grade when I awoke one morning to be told our school had flooded. The best thing about it was that we had a few days off before we were all transferred to other schools in the district. I was separated from my best friends but eventually met new ones. Cheryl, who lived in the next block, an unhappy, nervous child at the mercy of a very manic mother, had eczema all the way up to her elbows. She had her forearms salved and wrapped in white rags and always wore long-sleeved white blouses. She took her unhappiness out on me one day by saying her mother had told her I was adopted. I nervously laughed it off but it bothered me to the point that I finally asked Judy if it were true. She denied it. Thank goodness. Why didn't I ask my parents? If anybody knew, it would be them. Did I know the truth in my heart but was afraid to hear it?

"Adoptive parents are advised by agencies to tell the child early that he is adopted, lest

someone else tell him rudely or carelessly, thus leaving a wound that cannot be healed." ⁴

✎ 1950 ✎

When I was ten years old Al Jolson died. Truman ordered full speed ahead on the H-bomb. Now the Soviet Union and the United States had the atomic bomb and everybody we knew was talking about building bomb shelters. Anti-communist witch-hunts instigated by the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) lead by Senator Joe McCarthy was at work on Hollywood. This resulted in the infamous blacklisting of all people whose views were in the slightest suspect. When he was done, four years later, thousands of lives had been ruined.

I barely remember my parents talking about the Cold War and Communism. They mentioned that Cheryl's mother was a Communist and from then on, whenever I went to her house, I felt strange and looked for something that made her different from me. But she was the same as before and I wasn't sure what being a Communist was all about. They also spoke about some of their favorite movie stars who were being harassed by this bully, McCarthy. This was a terrible thing.

✎ 1951 ✎

Drive-in cinema opened all over the USA. The National Ballet of Canada, founded by British expatriate Celia Franca, gave its first performance and we were there.

I was in sixth grade when we lined the streets to see Princess Elizabeth and Prince Philip, the world's best-known newlyweds on their tour of Canada. Most Canadians were enraptured with royalty and my mother's excitement was infectious. We waited for hours until the cavalcade flanked on all sides by red-coated Mounties on shiny black horses passed and were gone in a matter of moments.

✎ 1952 ✎

Vincent Massey was appointed the first Canadian-born Governor General following seventeen successive British office holders. King George VI died. The United States successfully tested its first H-bomb in the Pacific. The first oral contraceptive pill was produced.

Television transmission commenced in Canada from the makeshift Toronto studio of the CBC. La Famille Plouffe, a dramatic series of a working-class Quebec family, The Ed Sullivan Show, Howdy Doody and The Jackie Gleason Show were favorites along with, eventually, Lucille Ball, Bob Hope and Jack Benny, Milton Berle, Red Skeleton, Candid Camera and The \$64,000 Question. We watched all these shows but when visiting my aunt in Maine, we really got to see some television. There were more channels, many in color, with movies that ran almost all night. In less than two years one million sets had been sold. *"Within three years some 200 Canadian movie houses had closed their doors."* ⁵

When the tube was turned on my grandfather would put on his heavy wool coat, grey Persian

hat and walk out into the cold winter night refusing to watch. He said it was the downfall of the family. Nobody talked anymore.

At the age of twelve after wearing glasses for many years to correct a weak muscle in my right eye which caused me to hold my head tilted to one side, I entered the hospital once again, this time for an eye operation. I was extremely uncomfortable in this alien environment and wanted so badly to go home. When the doctor, a large gentle man who wheezed when he bent over to look into my eyes, appeared to take off my bandages, I was apprehensive. Everything was blurry for the first few days, my head did straighten and I didn't have to wear glasses anymore. Although when I look closely at myself in the mirror now, my features seem slightly crooked and when I bend my head back to where I used to hold it, they straighten. I guess after twelve years of having grown one way due to gravity, my characteristics became permanent. And so I lead a crooked life. I believe that my head still falls ever so slightly to the right when I am tired.

Aside from the book my mother gave me to read when I was ten years old I was exposed to sex in our moral, wholesome, hygiene class at school. Girls and boys sat in separate areas of the movie room and as the lights were turned off, the camera rolled showing artists' renditions of our reproductive organs that elicited giggles and embarrassed coughs. So I learned the rudiments of sex, what happened, not really how it happened nor what to do about it. It was never discussed with my girlfriends or my parents, and was a closed topic except for my father watching me like a hawk and warning me about not having sex with men.

My grandfather had remarried and because my mother was antagonistic towards his new wife, we didn't see them often. They had moved to a small town in the Laurentian Mountains, about sixty miles north of the city, and for my twelfth birthday he wrote me this letter.

My dear Granddaughter Renee,

To my deep regret, I am unable to participate in your birthday celebrations tonight, so I am resorting to the best way I know how, and am sending you an address on this happy occasion, and hope to be able to express to you, even partly, the significance of your present birthday.

At the age of twelve, a girl reaches the stage when she is officially brought into, proclaimed by, her family and society as a "Young Lady" even as a boy is proclaimed a "Young Man" at the age of 13 when he is brought up to his "Bar Mitzvah." Tonight you are proclaimed a Young Lady, so I take great pleasure in outlining to you, some of the very important reasons, as to why the age of 12, or even the number 12, play such an important part in one's life, particularly, in the Jewish Calendar.

1) Our ancient Great-Grandfather Jacob had 12 Sons. Those 12 Sons, starting with Reuben and ending with Benjamin, constituted the 12 Tribes of the Jewish Nation.

2) There are 12 months in the year. That is, of course, elementary knowledge, but every month of the year has its own elements, such as: cold, mild and warm temperatures, sunshine or cloudy skies, or "stormy-weather." All those elements in the "Year-round" are also prevalent in

the human body. Your lovely smile is Sunshine, while your anger or wrath is Storm. Your being of good and considerate disposition is just as soothing as are mild waves on your body when you are bathing in peaceful streams. In the years which lie ahead, you will be in a position to develop all the good elements with which nature endowed you to the best of your ability, especially, taking example of your good and lovely parents.

3) Each month of the year has its Symbol or Luck. October, or in Jewish - Cheshwn - has as its Symbol a group of Stars being 12 in number, and it has the shape of an "Acrov," or Scorpion. Those 12 stars are placed: 4 in each side and 4 in the tail, while the head is on a long neck, and is free to maneuver its body in the darkest of times.

I conclude my short little address to you, my dearest Renee, by extending to you my most sincere wishes for many, many happy birthdays. And to you, my dear daughter Esther and you, my dear son-in-law Myer, I send my best wishes. May you live to celebrate Renee's many more birthdays, and live to celebrate her wedding day.

Your Zaida and Bobbe

I don't remember how I felt about him not attending but I loved him deeply and know I must have been confused as to why he stayed away. A year later while visiting him in the Hospital of Hope where he lay dying of throat cancer, emaciated and disappearing into the bedclothes, he held my hand, and in a labored garbled voice, told me to love my parents and be good to them. I felt sad leaving him alone in that room. I hesitated at the doorway and looked back at my favorite grandfather knowing I would never see him again. I remember having an overwhelming need to cry out and tell him to get better but I remained quiet, not wanting to cause a commotion.

✿ 1953 ✿

"After the holocaust, a greater degree of toleration towards Jews became evident." "In Montreal, the latent antagonism between English and French often found its outlet at the expense of the Jew." Queen Elizabeth II was crowned in Westminster Abbey. Mt. Everest was climbed by Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay. Stalin died and Nikita Khrushchev became premier of Russia. General Dwight D. Eisenhower was inaugurated as U.S. President. Louis St. Laurent was re-elected as prime minister of Canada. Color TV was introduced. JFK married Jacqueline Bouvier. Grandma Moses achieved global fame for her "primitive" art. NBC aired the first televised Academy Awards ceremony to the largest single audience in network TV's five-year history.

Nobody ever talked to me about anti-Semitism. Either my parents denied it, afraid to think of its implications having fled the pogroms in Russia, or sheltered from much of the world's unwholesomeness, they kept me sheltered as well from its insidious effects. Secrets were a way of life in my family. When somebody yelled "moodzi Juif" at my father, he replied, "Ah, c'mon, that's not nice." I felt strange that such an aggressive act wasn't dealt with more definitely. I don't know what else he could have done but I was so easily intimidated and didn't really understand what came with being Jewish. He negated this discrimination of Jews

and I grew up unaware of the racism that persisted in Quebec as well as the rest of the world.

At the age of thirteen I graduated from elementary school with an overall grade of "G" meaning average; though excellent in spelling, music, art (my favorite), and physical education (I loved marching to John Philip Sousa's music but found competitive sports intimidating). I was dutifully well-behaved and conscientious about my homework, and my parents never reprimanded me about grades. I don't ever remember being afraid to go home with my report card like some of my friends.

This apparently blissful family scene went on until I was thirteen. Until now I had led a normal life thinking they were my real parents. Underneath I felt uncomfortable at times and not understanding why, I blamed myself for my mother's unhappiness and neurotic behavior. We had gathered in the living room. I was sitting with my back to the bay window that looked out onto the courtyard and as late afternoon radiance streamed through the sheer curtains, a slight breeze caused them to billow around me. My mother and father sat before me.

"We love you very much ... ," they were saying.

And then the bomb dropped. Something was mentioned about adoption and my friend's words materialized in my mind. It was true. She knew. Everybody knew. I didn't hear anymore. It was as if their words emerged from an echo chamber, as if I were submerged in a tub of warm water and they were looking down at me. I saw two people talking but I couldn't hear what they were saying ... there was no sound.

"When the emotional pain in the limbic system reaches overwhelm, an automatic mechanism shuts the gate to the neocortex. It's as if there were some loud noise streaming in from another room and you walked over and shut the door." ⁸

My hands felt like they weren't mine ... confining ... uncomfortable. There was no pain, just a heavy feeling, a weight on my abdomen. A figure was trying to get through the black background. No surprise except my whole life exploded. It just wasn't there anymore. Where was I? Who were these people? Who was I?

I had to go on. The only thing I could do was pretend everything was okay and what happened wasn't real. I was too embarrassed to cause a commotion or let them know I didn't understand. But suddenly I felt I didn't count anymore. They told me I had been adopted from the Baron de Hirsch, that my real father was killed in the war and my real mother had died in childbirth. At the time that didn't mean anything. Having another mother was ludicrous, unfathomable and who the hell was Baron de Hirsch! What is a thirteen-year-old supposed to do with such devastating news? I suppressed my feelings and ignored the issue, a mode that has carried on throughout my life, and ran outside to join my friends skipping rope ... double Dutch ... I needed my wits about me.

"Stepping on a landmine is not painful. One experiences an ill-defined awareness of dysfunction, combined with a greater or lesser degree of fear and disorientation, but no pain."

One does not expect the event. I was immediately aware of the meta- physical explosion, but I felt little pain and remained relatively aware that a major part of my life had just been blown away. It seemed like I belonged somewhere else and my parents were no longer my family." ⁹

There was a lot of secrecy involved. A family scandal. A bond or promise was made between your parents that this was the story to be revealed to you. The family had begged them for years to tell you that you were adopted and couldn't understand why they waited so long. Their response was they were doing what they thought was right. Your parents had a great desire to make the past disappear and for you to be their child.

Psychic Reading by Joy, 1985

I think my resentment started to build then - slowly - unconsciously - until it would become unbearable and suddenly the realization surfaced that I hated my mother, expressing itself in a sharp retort, an agonizing argument or cold repressed silence.

God gave us the ability to deny so we could go on living in impossible situations. Along with denying my adoption, many other feelings were denied as well. Life went on as usual except for a few minor encumbrances: feeling uncomfortable while watching a program about adoption on TV with my parents; or the time my mother made a point of telling me about one of my friends being adopted; or when she got me together with one of her friend's daughters who was adopted. I did not want to pay any attention to her feeble attempts to make adoption seem commonplace.

"One definition of psychological trauma is an experience that is sudden, unexpected, abnormal. It disrupts one's sense of self and identity. This is what happens when a child learns he is adopted." ¹⁰

"I never thought of myself as being born, only adopted. At times it's confusing to sort out what about me is genuine and true, and what about me was developed as a survival strategy to be able to stay in my adoptive family. The expected role I played became 'me.' My self got lost underground, and I never thought of birth parents as a reality." ¹¹

My own adoption was a forbidden subject and we pretended that it didn't exist. I didn't talk about it for the next thirty-two years.

VIRGIN OR NOT

Along with most of the kids from public school, I enrolled in high school, a large prosaic brick building across the street from my house. Although I had been staring at it for years, I never really knew what went on inside. The excitement, mixed with trepidation as to what high school was all about, dissolved when classes began and my timidity evaporated. It was school, just like before, with a bit more freedom. I went to the afternoon dances and felt insecure at not being asked to dance as often as the other girls. My self-esteem was at an all-time low, having just discovered I was alone in the world, although my outward life went on apparently uninterrupted. I had a crush on a boy I sat next to in some of my classes but we never danced together. To achieve that I asked him to a club party. My friend Judy and I, both of us terribly shy, got together and phoned our dates. Much to our surprise they accepted. Wearing shirtdresses with cinched waistbands, crinolines and black pumps, we were picked up and escorted to the YMHA where a chaperoned, programmed party ensued. It was exciting, slightly intimidating, and when he walked me home, a quick kiss on the doorstep brought the evening to a close.

🌿 1954 🌿

Sixteen-year-old Canadian Judy Bell swam forty-two miles across Lake Ontario from Youngstown, New York, to Toronto in twenty-one hours and I remember how we listened anxiously on the radio as they followed her progress and talked about the temperature of the water and how strong she was still, even after so many hours. Elvis Presley, 19, made his first record.

"Penny loafers, cashmere sweaters, brown and white saddle shoes, jitterbugging, 'sh-boom, sh-boom' by the Crewcuts,"¹ and ponytails were in vogue.

I would never wear my hair in a ponytail because a girlfriend had told me I had big ears. Until well after being married I was utterly paranoid and self-conscious about my ears.

I was fourteen when my mother took me, unsuspectingly, to a female physician to have me checked. She never admitted the real reason for the visit, which was to see if I was still a virgin, but I received an internal examination that made me feel embarrassed and violated. I heard the doctor tell her in the adjoining room my hymen was intact and my protruding tummy was just fatty tissue. I knew then that there wasn't any trust in my family although that fact didn't surface clearly until I was eighteen and my father called me down to the furnace room and disgustedly thrust my opened diary at me. How could I write such things, he demanded over and over again - then indignantly forced me to throw it into the furnace, burning the unforgivable facts forever. I was devastated. My journal where I had written all my secrets was private. I hated him and once again felt embarrassed and violated. Little did I know he was projecting his actions onto me, and instead of admitting his affairs to my mother, he directed at me his misplaced shame, anger and mistrust. I wonder if I had been their real child, would

there have been more trust in our relationship. Trust and love go together.

*"Adopted children often do not feel entitled to express any negative feelings such as grief or anger at being cut off from their origins. Some become so successful at splitting off their feelings and keeping up a cheerful facade that they do not even know when they are angry."*²

✎ 1955 ✎

In Montgomery, Alabama, forty-three year old Mrs. Rosa Parks sat in the white section of the bus and was arrested. A boycott of all city buses by the blacks resulted in the Supreme Court outlawing segregation on local bus lines in 1956. Princess Margaret renounced the crown for commoner Peter Townsend. All over the U.S. kids were wearing Davy Crockett hats.

After we moved to the suburbs, I transferred to another high school, a bit closer to our new home, where some of my camp friends were going, and used a relative's address who lived in that school district so I could register. It meant a long streetcar ride with three transfers, but I didn't want to go to the suburban high school where I didn't know anybody. I would once again be an outsider.

The growth of the suburbs was explosive with new subdivisions sprouting up all over. It didn't matter that we were on the approach route to Dorval Airport where planes began their descent over our rooftops causing the windows to vibrate; the land was what my parents could afford and it was the thing to do. Our modern ranch-style bungalow, one of three different designs, with front and back lawn, rock garden, weeping willow and soon-to-be finished basement, was so different from the downtown gritty streets of the crowded neighborhood to which we were accustomed.

I returned to camp as a senior for the next two summers and a counselor's aide after that. It was then that I was introduced to the wilderness and outdoor living. Being too young in previous years to go on overnight expeditions, I remember enviously watching the older girls leave on canoe trips. I wanted so much to do this but we had to "swim the lake," just over a quarter of a mile, and pass a critical canoe test before our names could be added to the list of candidates. My counselor, who was head of the waterfront, helped me through these tests, and one morning about twenty of us sang our way out of camp as the truck pulling six canoes headed north for five days in the Quebec wilderness. We paddled until we couldn't feel our arms, mostly ate canned peaches because one of the supply canoes had tipped over while we rushed to get across a lake one stormy afternoon, slept in a long tent made up of a tarp stretched between two distant trees and pegged along each side, and arrived back at camp, heroic, drenched and dirty but very happy. I couldn't wait to do it all again.

I could forget who I was and where I came from in the outdoors. There was more sky, trees, mountains and water; a summer storm with nowhere to hide; eating outside with no table manners; being dirty without reprimand; away from all that was familiar and taking risks rather than remaining in reassured comfort. It was all about freedom.

"At first you're a stranger to the forest. Then, without noticing a difference, you feel more at home here than anywhere else. It happens, not quickly or simply; it happens in your bones, a promise that can't be taken back." ³

I was chosen to be the bride in the mock-wedding, though I still didn't think I was popular or pretty. Jerome, a senior at the boy's camp, fell head over heels in love with me and became my steady boyfriend. He was tall, dark, skinny, and comical, almost silly at times. I was so serious because being silly had been discouraged - maybe that's what attracted me to him. We were in the spotlight as far as camp romances went and I loved the attention I got being his girl. On visiting day when I pointed him out to my parents they thought he was funny-looking.

There's a certain part of you that you have repressed because if you let it out you may be silly, a part of you that you need to own and integrate into the rest of your life - to be really whole. If you have had frustrations in expressing yourself, that is where the source point is. It goes back to the energy from your real mother - very bubbly energy and your parents saw that in you and you learned to hold it in - it wasn't encouraged - you learned not to go out there and get wild.

Psychic Reading by Joy, 1985

Kissing and necking were the extent of my sex life; "going all the way" was uncommon in my circle of friends. Jerome and I attended the same school and our romance blossomed. It was fun to hang out with him at lunch time amongst all the other couples. I had a steady and felt better about myself. I remember persuading my mother to buy me a pair of winter boots, the same style my boyfriend and everybody else had, and wore them unzipped with the tongues hanging out. They looked grotesque and very unladylike but I didn't care. Fitting in and being cool were much more important at fifteen.

Art, music and biology were my strengths, while history and geography left a lot to be desired. Tenth year graduation got me a proficiency badge, two honors and a first in biology; the rest I can't recall.

🌿 1956 🌿

Grace Kelly married Prince Rainier of Monaco. "Egypt took control of the Suez Canal and was immediately attacked by Israel, France and Britain. Lester Pearson, Canada's external minister, proposed a compromise of sending a major U.N. peace-keeping contingent to Suez which successfully restored order."⁴

My relationship with Jerome was on the wane when my Sweet Sixteen Party arrived but it was too late to change my mind on another escort. Everything my parents dreamed of was planned for that event, more like a low-budget Jewish wedding, and my mother called me selfish when I balked at her intentions, rebellious at being forced to conform. She was a self-indulgent, spoiled woman who praised me to her friends and criticized me to my face, complaining that I didn't appreciate anything she did for me. "I work my fingers to the bone trying to be a good

mother to you," was her constant criticism. I couldn't please her. I just didn't turn out the way she had imagined. How could I? I wasn't hers. I didn't look like her, think like her or act like her. I was different. Who was I like? Who did I look like? Who did I take after? I never thought about it. I neglected to regard my adoption as an influence in my life, denying its reality as my parents preferred.

*"Adolescence is the time when people begin to put together their identities - to figure out who they are. Your identity connects you to other people - people of a certain race or nationality and with people who believe a certain way and with people of a certain social and educational level. When you're with them, you feel you belong. Adopted people don't know who their ancestors were, they've never seen other people who look like them - and to some degree the identity of an adopted person remains incomplete."*⁵

There was a terrible snowstorm while I was attending a Christmas party at a friend's house. The roads were impassable. Everybody called home and received permission to sleep over. Much to my humiliation my father came to get me. What did he think I was going to do if I stayed, what he was doing? If you can't trust yourself, you can't trust anybody. They lied and expected trust. We just barely made it home; he was totally aggravated that he had to come out at all.

*"Preoccupied with the possibility of their daughters' teenage pregnancies, fathers I have known seem needlessly strict and punitive in their discipline."*⁶

I started dating another boy whom I had also met at camp. In response to an invitation to his home in the Laurentians for a weekend of skiing, my parents flatly refused even though his parents were going to be there. Only after much pleading was I allowed to go. Had I been invited by him alone I could understand such excessive resistance, but my father's inflexibility was disproportionate to the request. I hated him for being so harsh and unyielding.

I had been studying art privately for years with a well-known artist, an eccentric, impatient woman who made me feel like an intruder at times, like my mother, although once we got started she seemed to relax. Years later when I saw my paintings hanging in my parents' home I realized how intense my training had been with her. Even though art was my highest mark on my high school graduation certificate, it was not what I pursued until later in life. Art was just a hobby and I had to have a profession because my parents didn't. When a physiotherapist gave a talk at our school, it fitted into my parents' plans for me - my father had always wanted to be a doctor, and like so many decisions in my life I made the one expected of me rather than the one I wanted. My grades were high enough to make me eligible for the Department of Physical and Occupational Therapy at McGill University. That was as close as my father was going to get to an M.D. degree.

❧ 1957 ❧

"Elvis Presley started rock 'n' roll. The Platters, Everly Brothers, Johnny Mathis, Buddy Holly and The Del Vikings were some of the 45's we bought. *Blackboard Jungle* with its hit

song 'Rock Around the Clock' and *Rebel Without a Cause* were the definitive films of America's rebellious youth and every teenager on the continent fell in love with James Dean. He epitomized the alienation of teenagers around the world. He along with Elvis and Marlon Brando led to the beat generation. Beatnik girls wore black stockings, straight hair, colored eyeshadow and no lipstick." Oh, how I wanted to be a beatnik.

My first year at McGill University was spent in the Faculty of Science, a prerequisite for Physiotherapy. I joined a sorority, having gone through rushing, pledging and initiation to finally become one of the group, although I didn't enjoy attending meetings nor was I as dedicated as others. My friends in the Arts Faculty with their 14- to 16-hour weeks, as opposed to my 36-hour weeks, spent their free time at the meeting hall in the library and I was envious of them. It never occurred to me that I might not have been doing what I wanted. I always did all the things that were expected of a young girl with my background.

A handsome, tall, blond Christian boy in my chemistry class captured my interest but I was too shy and programmed for a Jewish life. Had he come forward I would have complied and readily dumped the dogma of a bigoted background. However, we did share the same Bunsen burner and helped each other with experiment results. Fraternity parties were fun, football games brought time to trifle and my sorority sisters never filled the bill of real ones.

✎ 1958 - 1959 ✎

After struggling through physics and finishing my first year of science, I started in the Department of Physiotherapy, located up "on the hill" in a beautiful old building off-campus. The class was made up of girls from across Canada, mostly the Maritimes, who lived in the dormitory next to the university grounds. They thought I was lucky to be from Montreal, with my parents close, and I thought they were lucky to be away from home. For as long as I can remember the natural progression was for me to go to university and with McGill in my backyard, another choice was never considered.

My third and final year of university found me dating working boys rather than school boys and spending less time on campus. I tried hard to love a guy my mother liked, lost my virginity to a great dancer, pursued a person engaged to another, skipped classes for afternoon movies with a boyfriend, and thought I was going to marry each one of them. The long grueling hours of study and a relentless anatomy course with Saturday morning lab work, cutting my weekends short, were a burden, and at nineteen, still checking in at home with my parents in the driver's seat, I looked forward to graduating and getting on with a more liberated life.

✎ 1960 ✎

John F. Kennedy became president of the United States. "After eight years of experiments on animals and women in Puerto Rico, medical scientists pronounced the contraceptive pill safe for humans." The FDA approved the pill. Women weren't afraid of getting pregnant anymore and pre-marital sex became common. The Sexual Revolution was born.

Those yearnings of autonomy and a more liberated life were set aside when, at the last sorority party I attended, I met the man of my dreams. He was seven years older than me, a former high school football player (I had never gone out with a football star), and worked as a businessman so he had an income and he was interested in me. I didn't care why at the time. I ignored the fact that he was still living with his parents and didn't realize that we had nothing in common except that we both wanted to get away from our families. My parents would have preferred a doctor or a lawyer but didn't make a fuss about him or his income. He wined and dined me, laid his coat down on the Ice Palace slide for me to ride on, and picked me up at McGill in his shiny, new sedan. He had a close group of friends who were mostly married. We became engaged just before I graduated.

At the end of three years of Physiotherapy I had a four-month internship, part of which was spent at the Royal Victoria Hospital where patients had to be taught how to get on and off beds and how to negotiate crutches after being bedridden. I massaged, stretched, and exercised them and attempted to raise their spirits. I grew quite fond of a woman with Parkinson's disease and spent all my extra time with her. Upon entering her room one morning I found it empty with the mattress rolled up. A check at the nurse's station confirmed my frightful feelings. I hadn't thought her sick enough to die and felt guilty for not having spent more time with her. Her death shocked me into the realization that I might not be able to handle this type of work. At my next assignment, at the Veterans Hospital, I was taken aback to learn that I had to lead exercise classes for those who weren't going to get into a conventional bend and stretch session. This was the Army and the head of the department, more like a tough sergeant, ran her classes like Boot Camp. It was quite a challenge for me to even raise my voice amongst this species who, when they saw me, figured I was a write-off. They tested me more than once as to my courage and determination and eventually realized that even though I was small and unassuming, I nevertheless had a strong will and was not going to stand for any insubordination. I then interned at the Children's Hospital at the time of the Thalidomide babies and found it impossible to exist without being incredibly depressed all the time. It was heartrending to see little babies with no arms and legs, just flippers, who needed to learn to function. I felt ineffectual at conferences with a team of therapists, social workers, doctors, nurses and their parents as we addressed the issues they were going to have to face in their pathetic lives. And all this because doctors prescribed an obviously untested drug to pregnant women for morning nausea.

I spent the last six weeks of my internship at a hospital in a small town in Ontario, a day's drive from Montreal. I stayed with my cousins, Saul, and his wife, Becky and their five kids, the last born with Down's syndrome. She was a lovable, funny and joyful child and the family had united in an attempt to make her life normal. I slept on a sofa bed in the den of their split-level house, had a bathroom to myself and loved being away from home. My cousin, however, exacting in her ways, did keep a close watch over me. When my fiancé came to visit, she waited up for me every night and I felt as restricted as I had at home.

The cap and gown ceremony in which I received my diploma was attended by my family, fiancé and prospective in-laws. Awed by the pomp and circumstance I felt that everybody was

pleased with me. I landed a job at the Rehabilitation Centre in downtown Montreal working with disabled veterans and low-income patients, a far cry from the harrowing hospital ambience. We were a group of therapists who carried huge loads, had potluck dinners every few months and generally got on well. My work was gratifying, my patients, some of whom were with me for a long time, hopeful and trusting, and my boss, a middle-aged woman from England, strict, capable and dedicated. Part of the time I was on Home Service, driving the Centre's car to the homes of patients who were incapable of getting out for therapy. Poor people in poor living conditions opened my eyes and heart to the way it was for so many. They anxiously waited for me to come, were reluctant to let me leave and offered what little they had. But my heart wasn't in it. These people deserved more compassion.

Although I loved my patients, I disliked the routine of going to work every day without having time to do the things I wanted. Living at home, my parents took care of my basic needs and never pushed me to earn money so working was rather foreign to me. But I discovered that being a physiotherapist was a serious undertaking, laden with heavy responsibilities. It wasn't what you'd call an over-the-counter job. These patients' lives were in my hands: they needed to get well and I felt inept when their ailments didn't improve while their prognoses were positive. I worried with them when their healing was slow and they couldn't go back to work. At the end of the day I took them home in my heart. Was I doing what I wanted? I never thought about it. I wasn't thinking, I was doing what I was programmed to do.

"During these years, I rarely gave conscious consideration to any aspect of being adopted. I did not wonder about my natural parents, did not contemplate searching, and had no questions to ask my adoptive parents." ⁹

In the fall my fiancé returned to the road and I continued to work at my job. Telephone calls and letters were wrought with the anxiety of separation and longing. We pushed the wedding up a few months when I thought I was pregnant and instead of a June ceremony, we reserved the only date open at the synagogue, New Year's Day.

It was at this time that my adoption raised its ugly head. Since I had been told, almost seven years ago, it had not been brought up again. Out of the blue my parents asked if my future husband knew I was adopted, worried it might change his mind. I had never thought of telling him. Why should I when we never discussed it? I didn't understand their concern and wondered if there was something wrong with me that I didn't know about. What else hadn't they told me? I told him and he too pretended it wasn't true. It surfaced once again when the rabbi, unsure of my Jewishness, refused to perform the rites. What had my parents told him to cause this problem? Had I the presence of mind at the time I might have asked but because the subject was so painful, the thought of questioning them never even suggested itself. And so another chance to understand my origins was lost. I wasn't ready to deal with them nor to admit they existed. They were a nuisance and something to get over so I could go on with my life.

And that's what I did. I became 100% Jewish by going to the Mikvah, a ritual that women undergo to cleanse themselves after their menstrual periods. I had to be koshered like a

chicken. When my mother koshered her birds she laid them on a wooden board, scrubbed them with boiling salt water, making them correct for consuming. My parents were confused and very agitated, surprised that this came up at all since at the time of my adoption they thought they had done everything necessary to hide the truth.

An appointment was made and my mother accompanied me to the back of the synagogue. We rang a bell, the door opened, and we were led to a small dressing room where I was told to undress and wrap my naked body in a white sheet. My mother was told to wait there while I was ushered into another room with a narrow, deep, rectangular, white-tiled pool filled with warm water. There were stairs at one end and I stepped down to the bottom, waist-high. I trembled while my mother paced impatiently in the adjoining room. The attendant, a middle-aged matron, told me to wait and left. Three old men entered. The rabbi said a prayer and asked me to submerge. I did as I was told but because my long hair floated on the surface, they convened and finally asked me to do it again. Clutching the sheet tightly around me and shivering, I lowered myself once more into the tepid bath. They suddenly disappeared and the matron entered with a towel. As I emerged from the pool my mother looked at me through worried eyes. She was very anxious about this disquieting turn of affairs, in itself a mere tradition, but in her mind, thoughts of her barrenness, her secret, had surfaced. I tried to calm her unconscious questioning by telling her I was okay. Unfortunately by protecting her feelings I ignored my own, which added more trauma to the original abuse and fostered an emotional pattern which was difficult to identify and almost impossible to break in later years. I went through that ordeal emotionless except for the occasional tremble that registered somewhere in my body. I was embarrassed about myself and my unknown origins. When we got home my mother called my father to tell him it was over. It destroyed them by bringing up their issues of infertility and the fact that I wasn't truly theirs, which they continued to pretend to believe. However, I had set their minds at ease by accepting this ritual without complaint or question. We all pretended it had never happened. The unconscious, a haven for these experiences, eventually regurgitates when least expected. It took another thirteen years for that to happen. I never talked about it until I was divorced and my new partner, open and anxious to explore all parts of me including my mind, forced me to talk about my life. It took another fifteen years to begin to search and even feel free to utter that A-word aloud. He accepted my adopted status in this world well before I did.

I was then twenty and hadn't faced the fact that I was still operating on some- one else's agenda and was ill-prepared for adult life, having never dealt with my demons. But I didn't have to listen to my parents any longer and was finally going to be on my own, not realizing that might have been one of the motives behind my marriage. Another was that his way of life fit into my programmed existence, that of having been abandoned: he abandoned me for the road. Our minds move in mysterious ways and are controlled by our emotions which grow from our needs, many of which have never been fulfilled. We are not all raised in a secure atmosphere where our parents were present psychologically at all times. But they too may have had their requirements unmet, leaving them impoverished, and so they come to us emotionally lacking and needy, and we in turn are influenced by their inadequacies. Adopted people have two sets of parents whose personalities they must consider as tools for self-knowledge, and so often as in my case, one set of these is unknown. Therefore, there are no

clues until we are old enough to have a history of our own and by then, the damage is done.

When invited to dinner at my fiancé's home I was surprised at his mother's subservience and felt ill-at-ease. That should have given me a clue but something in my upbringing attracted me to this scenario. I didn't consciously know then that my father was such a controlling element in my parents' marriage because my mother was always ordering him around. He was more subtle in his manipulation, treating her like a queen, expounding on her attributes. Having been raised by five doting sisters, he was spoiled, used to getting his own way, had no boundaries and surreptitiously coerced my mother and me into believing he was honest. He was more devious in getting what he needed, needed more than he got and found it elsewhere. My mother's obsequiousness became mine, provoking us to treat him as if the sun rose and set on him. It allowed me to take my hostility out on her, which he encouraged. Consequently my mother and I were always at odds.

The male role model established by my father was fastidiously filled by the man I chose to marry - which father, I'm still not sure. Probably a bit of both. Like my father, the man I married was a charmer, never finished high school or read books and used women for his own ends, thinking them inferior. Both were mama's boys, spoiled by women while growing up. We can smell the childishness, it's attractive because it's familiar. He had no interest in art or music, and he was dishonest as I eventually found my father to be. It was all there but I chose not to see it. If I couldn't have my father I was going to have somebody just like him. There may have been some conflicting elements in my choice since there existed, inherent in my psyche, two distinct male role models. The qualities that didn't reflect my adoptive father might possibly reveal those of my biological father.

The overt manner of my husband's and father-in-law's subjugation of women continued to disturb me, unfortunately not enough to stop the nuptials. The first dinner I prepared for him in our new home was greeted with his impatient finger tapping on the table. I stared at him wondering what he was doing. How was I supposed to know the salt wasn't on the table? Stupefied, I ordered him to get it himself. It didn't happen again. He was just doing what his dad had done, expecting me to react like his mother. He was in for a surprise.

Two incidents should have warned me about my prospective partner. Early on, well before our engagement, we had left a French restaurant after a divine dinner and were driving through the downtown streets of Montreal when he pulled up behind a taxi that had paused at a stop sign. He waited for a moment and then impatiently nudged the taxicab's bumper. When the driver looked back my date motioned for him to get going. The cabbie got out of his car and approached with a heavy chain in his hand. I couldn't believe what was happening. My date got out, towering over his opponent, ready for a fight. Suddenly a policeman appeared on the scene. I remember there were crowds of people on the sidewalk peering at us. He got back into the car and glanced at me, pleased at his performance.

The second occurrence took place at our wedding when we were all gathered under the chupa in front of three hundred hungry guests. As the rabbi was doing his thing, my husband-to-be looked at his watch twice, showing his impatience with the ceremonial intricacies. I felt uneasy

and embarrassed at his insensitivity but it was too late. We were married as the rings slipped onto our fingers and his foot smashed the napkin-wrapped glass. I squelched my feelings and silenced my mind while we went on with the wedding. The air was never cleared.

Our wedding night at the hotel was interrupted by a frightful fight in the next room. The splintering of glass as a lamp fell to the floor, a few loud thumps as if somebody was getting beaten and some muffled cries disturbed the auspicious aftermath of our evening. A call to the manager eventually brought quiet but the vibrations hung around and we were glad to leave the next morning.

Just before the wedding he surprised me with the possibility of purchasing a house in the suburbs, part of a housing development for which one of his friends had the building contract. I loved it. It was exciting to have a home of my own with a front and a back yard and still unfinished so we could make a few changes. We slowly decorated while playing at happiness and my new role as wife was welcome, getting me out of my parents' house. While my husband's job took him away for three months at a time, I continued to work at the Rehabilitation Centre.

MARRIAGE, MOTHERING & MARIJUANA

"Beneath the surface the separatist forces in the province were growing." "After 1960 Quebec wanted to become like the rest of North America while remaining French speaking." "We accepted American capital and technology and at the same time, we blamed the Americans for everything that was new and unwelcome. During the 1950's, Canada moved into a state of economic dependence on the United States."

"The women's liberation movement was born and children of the post World War II baby boom came of age. They were the generation that was told to fight a war and refused." "Bob Dylan, the poet and prophet of the counter-culture, poured out all the sneering, pitying contempt the young felt for their elders." "These kids grew up with the Bomb, life in a fallout shelter and the possible ways the world might end." "The hippies, successors to the beatniks, wanted to 'drop out' of the world while the activists wanted to change it." "Blue jeans became the uniform of a generation. A drug culture flourished as did sexual experimentation."

President John F. Kennedy established the Peace Corps. The Berlin Wall was built, a 28-mile wall to separate communist East Berlin from the city's Western section. As the civil rights and antiwar movements evolved, Indians started to think about changing their situation. They began to approach the U.S. government on the touchy subject of treaties.

✿ 1961 ✿

During my first year of marriage my job allowed me time off to visit my husband on the road and I began to see more of what he was like. We certainly didn't know one another when we got married. It's never the dinners at French restaurants and chivalrous gestures. There is always the shadow side - when we see through the crack to where a person's reality lies hidden, protected and perched, ready to rise.

I met his customers who placed their trust in his choices for their continued prosperity but watched in shock as he padded his orders to substantiate his quotas. When I expressed my concern for these people barely making a living in the most destitute of Canadian provinces, he banned me from the sample room, like King Henry VIII sending his wives to the Tower of London. There I stayed, afraid to think I might have made a mistake about him and too late to change my mind about my marriage until I met Arthur, one of his clients, a young, eligible bachelor, more concerned with who I was than my husband's business. While my spouse increased our income, my time in that town was never without adventure - sailing in the harbor, dinner when my husband's meetings ran late and an introduction to poetry and prose previously unknown to me.

When my husband was home, I switched gears from leading a single life to assimilating into his schedule, which is what most women did. His friends became our friends and their wives replaced the girlfriends of my college years, most of whom were still single. I sometimes saw

them on my own but married life begets hanging out with married couples. Even though these women and I were different, we found common ground on which our relationships could be based - babies. They tried to teach me how to play canasta without success. They were serious about the outcome, I wasn't. Years later a friend remarked, "If you're a failure at canasta, you're a success at life."

A friend who had a ski shack in a tiny resort town in Vermont invited us for a weekend and it was there that I was introduced to marijuana. A joint was passed around and when asked how I felt, I had to answer - nothing. That didn't stop me from trying again when the chance arose. An obsessive personality like mine, hinged on rootless, dubious underpinnings, burdened with low self-esteem, feelings of helplessness and rejection, was ready for relief. And relief was here at hand. It was easier than drinking hard liquor for which I had never acquired a taste. Marijuana was different and fitted my oral need, which had never been fulfilled. Aside from getting the munchies it made me feel spacier, slightly decadent, and the conservative institution of marriage less conforming, less confining. So a joint here and there suited my dereliction roots that lay carefully concealed, never coming up for questioning. I even felt silly at times (my birth mother's bubbly personality, as one psychic put it, finally surfacing). Drugs tear out the roots and provide a temporary escape from reality. By then I vaguely knew that something was wrong with my life.

I had worked for a year after I got married, traveled the Western U.S. for a month in a cramped car with my new husband and another couple with whom we had nothing in common, and I started feeling the nausea of pregnancy halfway through our ski trip. Upon returning home the news was filled with the monumental dilemma forced on the world by the potential threat of a sleeping giant, Communist Cuba, ninety miles off the coast of Florida, the closest any anti-American country has ever been to the United States.

A CIA-trained force invaded the coast of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs. In three days they were overpowered by Castro's army. Kennedy finally admitted that it was an American operation. It instigated Khrushchev to arm Cuba with nuclear-tipped missiles aimed at the United States. For thirteen days in October the world waited tensely until Khrushchev backed down, offering to dismantle the missile bases if Kennedy would promise not to invade Cuba.

Living in Canada and not being in the path of immediate danger, we watched from afar and felt safe. Staining caused me to quit my job and I prepared for motherhood by sewing maternity clothes and dreaming of storks and starry-eyed strategies.

✿ 1962 ✿

Betty Friedan issued her revolutionary book, *The Feminine Mystique*, all about equal rights for women. She wrote about women as mothers and wives, giving up their aspirations. The only way for a woman to realize who she is, is by doing some- thing creative of her own.

I was alone when my labor started and after a few hours of discomfort, my father-in-law drove me to the hospital. I guess he felt that if his son couldn't, he should. When the pain got too

intense, the idea of natural childbirth was abandoned and I succumbed to an episiotomy. The agony eased and I settled down to pushing while my doctor kept me abreast of the size of the opening. At 4:32 a.m., my baby kicked and twisted her way into the world, leaving me exhausted, chilled and trembling. My body shook for a long time, conscious I am sure, of the turmoil established when my biological mother had given birth to me. All the suppressed trauma of that event emerged through my musculature. I was as alone as she had been. My husband arrived that evening, spent a few days with us and left to continue his life uninterrupted by this momentous event that a couple normally shared. I was carrying on my inheritance of giving birth alone. I couldn't share my experience of childbirth with my adoptive mother.

My daughter Valerie was beautiful, weighed seven pounds four and a half ounces and was twenty inches long. I finally had a blood relative. She might even look like me. Nobody else did. After five days in the hospital we returned home where a nurse I had hired would help for the first month with motherly instincts I had not inherited.

My life wasn't mine anymore. Between making formula - I never had anybody to talk to about breast-feeding - washing, drying and folding diapers, not getting a full night's sleep, and trying to get some artwork done, I was a busy lady. I had to tackle unexpressed feelings which surfaced that I didn't understand and didn't feel free to talk about. There was a life in that other room, a living, breathing being for whom I was totally responsible. My patience was tested more than once when she cried and I didn't know what to do. With nobody to share this experience I was anxious and angry and took it out on her. She was so beautiful and so helpless. Spanking her when she was unable to relieve her discomfort left me feeling guilty, sad and frustrated. It didn't happen often because it didn't make me feel good.

I was raised to be a good Jewish wife and mother. I got married, had a child and continued to do what was expected of me. But I didn't have an adequate support system. I was home alone with the baby and disappointed with myself for not absolutely loving this motherhood experience.

At the time these thoughts never entered my mind but simmered subconsciously and only later became part of my reality when I felt burdened by the total responsibility of family life. I had never been able to do what I wanted, never having lived alone, and now I was in the same predicament. I wasn't alone and couldn't travel at my own speed. But I had wanted children while I was young enough to grow up with them. I didn't want to be "older" like my parents were when I entered their life. I had always been envious of a high school friend who spent most of her weekends horseback riding and skiing with her family. My parents introduced me to everything but never participated, and that separateness remained a gulf between us. Or perhaps subconsciously I just wanted to have a real relative, someone who looked like me and had the same blood running through her veins.

My baby was crawling at six months when Lester B. Pearson became Prime Minister of

Canada. She was standing at eight months and walking alone at eleven months.

Suddenly on November 22, President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas and the country, still in shock, watched on TV as Jack Ruby shot assassin Lee Harvey Oswald. Watching TV with tears streaming down my cheeks, I wondered why I was alone, aghast at the violence of which humanity is capable. When my husband flew home for a few days, it took Valerie a while to recognize that this was the man in her life.

As African-Americans were grappling with their sense of identity and the French in Quebec were in pursuit of a new identity and the youth of the sixties struggled with their search for identity, I was still out of touch with mine. Although I had tried marijuana and started to wonder why I was playing this role, I was still existing in survival mode, ceaselessly following my parents' traditional plan of marriage, kids and a clean kitchen. It wasn't that I was unhappy but was this what life was all about? What was I looking for? What was lacking? I didn't know except I did know that something was!

🌿 1964 🌿

The prodigious anti-war movement was instrumental in bringing the war to an end. "Roughly 30,000 'draft dodgers' fled to Canada to avoid being sent to Vietnam." The Beatles took North America by storm. South African civil rights leader Nelson Mandela was sentenced to life imprisonment.

Valerie's second birthday was attended by friends and family except her father who was away working. And I was pregnant again. During my third month I took her skiing along with my friend Arthur and came home to find myself staining. I miscarried soon after. Large clots of blood floating in the toilet hastily sent me to the hospital. I became depressed, guilt-ridden and ready to become pregnant again. It wasn't until late summer when I conceived and I was well on my way when our family flew south to the Caribbean to warm our winter weariness.

With my husband's continued lengthy absences and a child who kept me at home, I fell into creating a life of my own. I was invited to our friends' dinner parties but it was "couple stuff" and I was leading a single existence. When Arthur came to Montreal on buying trips, I went out with him much to my parent's distress. "What do you do, where do you go and is it right?" The symphony, the ballet, foreign movies and it was good company which I was definitely lacking. I resumed my art studies, enrolling in an etching class, but because a press was needed to produce a print, I was tied to the studio making me feel dependent, unable to work at my own pace.

I was surprised to find some friends were secretly finding shelter for draft dodgers. Totally involved with my own life I was not politically aware. We didn't see the thousands of dead parading across our TV screens in Canada. After all, I was living in a peaceful country and those things didn't happen here.

🌿 1965 🌿

At the beginning of May, after my friend sat with me timing my labor pains, I delivered my second girl, Susan, alone again. Because one of her lungs didn't inflate properly, she had to be kept in an incubator for a few days. I visited her often and felt strange not having her with me. Without her to care for I didn't feel at all motherly on the maternity ward. Being alone and having to shoulder the entire responsibility of a family, I was stressed both emotionally and physically.

✎ 1966 ✎

In the States draft calls for Vietnam were upped tenfold and campuses all over the country began erupting.

L'Ecole des Beaux Arts demanded the passing of a day-long exam for which I qualified. A young girl who lived up the street and adored my kids babysat and after preparing dinner for them, I rushed out of the house for the hour's drive downtown. It was difficult leading two lives - a mother and homemaker during the day and a bohemian artist at night - but I was as dedicated to my art as I was to having children.

I wanted to dress completely in black and be an artist - to be able to express a restlessness I felt but couldn't understand, a yearning for wholeness of which I felt only a part, and to let go of what I was holding on to. My mind was full of thoughts and feelings I needed to sort out and I didn't know where to start or how to lighten the load. I needed to tell my secrets. I needed somebody I could trust, who would listen to but not judge me. That didn't happen for seven years.

✎ 1967 - 1968 ✎

The "Greenhouse Effect" was suggested. Israel knocked off the Arabs in the Six-Day War.

I became pregnant for my third and last time and my husband was present as another girl, Elizabeth, was ushered into the world. I spent most of my time with my children, while their father drifted in and out of our lives, psychologically never present. I began to realize that I didn't mean as much to him as he meant to himself and the hole I tried to fill with a husband was still hollow. After the first five years of being a devoted wife, I had an affair with Arthur, who thought I was quite remarkable, enough to want to marry me.

Although my solitude enabled me to function like the single child I had grown up as, abandonment issues, inherent in my psyche, hovered just below the surface.

There was a period of abandonment when you were adopted that got you in the very core. You worked hard at trying to please.

Psychic Reading by Joy, 1985

Feelings of rejection, an original problem, arose. They made me uncomfortable. We are drawn to what is familiar. If it's abuse, we choose abusive situations; if it's rejection, then being rejected feels normal. These are habits to which we are accustomed and very difficult to break.

"In a child's mind, rejection and abandonment are equivalent to death." ¹⁰

A month after the birth of my daughter Elizabeth, a girl friend asked me to meet her for tea after her sculpture class. I arrived at the end of the session. Her instructor introduced himself, took my hands in his and asked what I did. He didn't wait to hear, just handed me a hammer and chisel and showed me how to carve on a scrap piece of marble. He said I should be sculpting and asked me to attend a few classes. I showed up twice and because I caught on so quickly, he sent me home to work by myself, furnishing me with a table, tools and a few slabs of marble. The other students were relieved to see me gone because I hadn't paid for his time and he was spending too much of it with me. I was intrigued with this new medium and more than ready for it, desperate for a means that would allow me full expression of my feelings. Nothing had really felt right until now. I set up the garage for carving with a small room for printing, and started unloading my psychic secrets into abstractions of concrete ideas. I loved the stone. I loved the work and spent long hours carving into the night after I put my kids to bed.

GOING TO THE COUNTRY

"In Vietnam, the death toll was up to 33,641. Anti-war demonstrations became bloody riots on college campuses and the bloodiest of all was in Chicago at the 1968 Democratic Convention." In the fall President Nixon started to withdraw troops. Jackie Kennedy and Aristotle Onassis were married on the island of Skorpios. Pierre Elliot Trudeau became prime minister of Canada.

My lady friends complained disdainfully when I chose my art in lieu of canasta soirees, but shopping, afternoon tea, evenings with the girls were never my thing. I found men more interesting and seemed to be surrounded by them. When we socialized, it was the women at one end of the room talking about diapers and dependable help and the men at the other, usually with me among them, discussing the length of skis, new brands, how they negotiated each run on the ski hill, football and hockey scores. On an invitation to dinner, the hostess slyly suggested casual dress but when we arrived I was surprised to see all the women dressed to the hilt. I had worn jeans. I was definitely not one of the bunch, and the ladies made sure I felt that way. It was heartening to have one of the husbands come to my defense; he remarked how great I looked and how it took courage to do one's own thing. I believe men were attracted to my independence and candid manner. They love a challenge but not necessarily being married to one.

You did not choose to be like your mother. You turned away from her and basically identified with your father.

Psychic Reading, 1983, by Mitra

Skiing gave way to golf, not my idea of summer fun. I diligently learned the game so as to spend time with my husband, which didn't happen often as he preferred golfing with the guys but I did what I had to do to get by, which was what I had done most of my life, not understanding that was what I was doing - getting by. I was married, had three children, a home of my own with a kidney-shaped swimming pool and enough money to cover our needs. Brought up under stringent rules, I was programmed to participate in the patriarchal program that existed - to please the man I was with and to be a dutiful wife. But I was a fish out of water, deeply unsatisfied, mired in the system and doing everything I could to break out of it. What intrigued me most were people just living together, dressed like beatniks, traveling around in vans. Nobody I knew felt that way.

As ski season returned, my husband's absence tried my patience to the point that I started to think of a weekend house in the Green Mountains of northern Vermont, where he was spending much of his time. Family responsibility, as always not equally shared, kept me home with the kids. I resented this. I found a tiny chalet, put a down payment on it and returned home to let my husband know about our plans. He didn't object.

The next few years went by with the normal cuts, scratches and bruises, both physically and emotionally, as we spent our time between our two homes. I resisted returning to the city after a weekend in the country. Hiking in the woods, swimming in the creeks and waterfalls and generally living outdoors reminded me of my camp days and canoe trips in the Canadian wilderness. There was a freedom in the country that the city couldn't offer. Clean air, cold evenings, fires in the fire- place, an unstructured existence.

🌿 1969 🌿

Nixon withdrew the first 25,000 troops from Vietnam. At Woodstock 400,000 kids held a love-in, first and grandest of the Rock Festivals. Pierre Trudeau cemented his claim to the trendiness crown by meeting with John Lennon and his wife, Yoko Ono, in his Parliament Hill office. Millions watched the Apollo Mission in space on TV as Neil Armstrong set foot on the moon. "An arms race of apocalyptic proportions was in progress between the United States and the Soviet Union."

After a year of marble stone cut printing, I was offered a one-woman show at a gallery in Old Montreal. A busy, noisy opening saw me dressed in a cinnamon velvet pantsuit that had taken me a few months to knit, closely-cropped, dyed, blonde hair and very stoned. My teacher was there beaming at what he had produced. There were people who knew me whom I didn't know and people who wanted to get to know me. My abstracts were up for scrutiny, for all to discover my secret liaisons, desires and needs, carved intricately into a web of textures, well hidden in the design. The museum purchased one of my pieces for its permanent collection and I dismantled my show after one month.

Valerie started first grade. The school was overcrowded but close to our house and she could come home for lunch. I wasn't sure how long she would be attending because of all the trouble between English- and French-speaking schools in Montreal.

"Under Bill 63 French was established as the primary language of instruction but parents were assured they could choose in which of the two languages their children could be taught." "Then the government of Premier Robert Bourassa took the step that would shake Canada to its roots. He repealed the bill and eliminated parental choice in Quebec by introducing Bill 22 in which the government declared French the only official language of the province. It stipulated that admissions to English- language schools depended entirely on whether or not a child's maternal language was English. The law now divided Quebec education along racial lines."

🌿 1970 🌿

The U.S. military budget was \$80 billion and the corporations involved in military production were making fortunes. At Ohio's Kent State University, four students were killed while demonstrating against the war. Students at four hundred colleges and universities went on strike in protest.

While all this was going on I was comfortably at home raising my kids, not having to work to support a family, totally ignorant of the world at large and the plight of women. I was anaesthetized to reality, still preoccupied with the life my parents had lived and planned for me - marriage, babies, a home in the suburbs and the whole nine yards of complacent, society-driven, unconscious living. What I finally began to realize was what was happening so close to home.

"The October FLQ Crisis shocked the city of Montreal. Members of the FLQ kidnaped James Cross, the British Trade Commissioner, and Pierre Laporte, the Quebec Cabinet Minister of Labor. The federal government invoked the War Measures Act which suspended civil liberties across the country. The police moved in. The FLQ retaliated by assassinating Laporte. Premier Robert Bourassa turned to the federal government for help and the Canadian army moved in."

"There were truck-loads of soldiers in the quiet streets of Montreal. And the police were given the right to break down any doors and arrest whom- so ever they chose. Cross's captors were never brought to trial and the government granted the terrorists safe conduct out of the country."

We listened to the gruesome details of the Cross kidnapping, shocked that this was happening in our province. It was only a matter of time before Quebec would become totally French and I didn't want to stay long enough for that to happen, especially with children in the school system for the next twenty years. I was happy in the United States, the school was smaller, the kids would be raised in the country, and I could have some peace of mind as a mother doing something for her children to enhance their upbringing. Perhaps my life would be less burdensome if I could walk in the woods, ski occasionally with my husband and generally feel that what I was doing was worthwhile. But most of all I didn't like being left alone. Marriage is about sharing.

That fall I would have two kids in school, Valerie in second grade and Susan in kindergarten. When it became apparent that the girls might have to attend a Roman Catholic school, it became easier to leave. I applied for an immigrant visa for admission to the United States and received a letter from the Consulate General granting me a Department of Labor Certification as a Physiotherapist - Schedule- A, Group II, but was dismayed to learn that there was a waiting time of eighteen months.



Leaving Montreal wasn't a problem for me. Perhaps being adopted and root-less allowed me to separate more easily. I might have been running from the constrictive conditions of city living, my parents, and maybe life in general, but I was ready for a change. That drive, established at the beginning when I changed hands from one set of parents to another, has forced a specific pattern of moving on, seeking, needing a nest, searching for my origins.

The United States continued to reduce forces in Vietnam. Deserters doubled since 1967. The environmental group, Green-peace, was formed. "President Richard Nixon ordered the Marijuana Commission Report because by 1971, it was apparent that marijuana smoking among teenagers and young adults in this country had taken on huge proportions, with the number of one-or-more-times users estimated at anywhere from 8,000,000 to 20,000,000 people." Daniel Ellsberg, a former Marine officer who worked for the Rand Corporation which did secret research for the U.S. Government, revealed the Department of Defense's History of the Vietnam War which he had helped write. This document, making clear that the government had lied about the war to the American people, became known as the Pentagon Papers.

Our weekend chalet was too small to live in permanently and we found five acres a few miles outside of town. An architect drew the blueprints, a local builder was hired, and an interior decorator helped with the details. It took most of the summer and beginning of fall to finish the structure and we moved in while my husband was away.

That winter I skied almost every day. A neighbor taught me a great deal and on weekends I taught my children. At one time we were four on the T-bar - Valerie next to me, Susan between my legs and Elizabeth on my back. Except for the occasional run, my husband still didn't ski with me. All that trouble for nothing. I did however get to see him more often, in the cafeteria for hot chocolate after an invigorating day on the junior hill. These seemingly trivial events stockpiled to build a ridge of resentment. The breezes were brewing and trouble loomed on the horizon.

✎ 1972 ✎

"An estimated 70,000 to 125,000 Americans had entered Canada during the war so as not to have to fight in Vietnam. The key phenomenon that suggested that the Canadian government was not entirely supportive of the American government was the country's embrace of American draft dodgers and deserters." Nixon pulled the last troops from Vietnam. Five men were arrested for breaking into the Democratic National Committee offices at Watergate. It was eventually found out that they were on the payroll of the Committee to Re-elect the President.

We finally received our blue cards, the United States officially accepting us as residents.

✎ 1973 ✎

This was the year of my accident, perhaps an unconscious desire to break the pattern of my life but more immediately, another plea for attention. My husband skied with better skiers than me, one of whom was a woman. I was jealous. They all decided to ski a very steep and difficult run which posed a problem for me. I managed to get down and on the next ride up got what I unwittingly wanted. It was a windy day, way below zero, and the chairs hammered into the pylons as they slowly crept up the mountain. Suddenly the crossbars of the tower

appeared directly in my path. There was a loud crash. I desperately tried to hold on but the safety bar slipped slowly from my grip. I fell through the air for what seemed an eternity. Then nothing.

I subsequently became the center of attention for the next three weeks, which I spent in the hospital mending a broken pelvis. It would have been much easier to have communicated my feelings about being left out but I couldn't do that, still caught in the grips of the powerful emotion of rejection with which I had never dealt and therefore couldn't get beyond. Accidents are not deliberate. They answer unconscious demands.

What bothered me most - besides the pain which was managed with morphine, and not being able to have my children visit - was knowing that I must come to terms with my life. I didn't like being married to one man while I enjoyed being with others.

DIVORCE IS A DIRTY WORD

*"Most of us will arrive at some point in our lives when the world with which we are most familiar no longer works for us. We are meant to outgrow ourselves; indeed we can no more avoid this development than we can stop the aging process. Our lives change externally as we change internally. More often than not when you are on the journey toward self-discovery, you will be met with opposition. I doubt that those of us on the search would make as much progress as we do if we knew ahead of time the full extent of the difficulties we will face."*¹

The accident was the turning point of my life. I knew I had to make a change but wasn't quite sure how to go about it. Pulling up stakes was inconceivable. Divorce was as foreign to me as adoption.

It was then, while recuperating, that Steve came into my life, marking the proverbial beginning of the end. He visited one weekend with a friend and after they left two dozen roses arrived. I felt a stirring in my heart. What flowers will do for a woman!

I read the book *Open Marriage* and suggested it to my spouse who regarded it as an alien intruder. I mentioned that we never talked and it might be useful to see a therapist. He said he wasn't crazy and if I thought I had a problem I should go. According to him everything was fine.

The one thing we did talk about was toilet paper. With everything else going on at the time, it was the toilet paper that got the biggest rise out of him. Like a dutiful caretaker, when a roll was used up I replaced it. But my husband threw a fit if it was hung the wrong way, with the paper hanging over the roll rather than coming from beneath. I actually never thought about it. Having so many other things to do, it was lucky the rolls got replaced at all. He was definitely stuck in an anal period of development, and could not get his shit together (no pun intended) about how I hung the toilet paper. It had become a constant irritant in our lives and we had terrible arguments about the proper procedure to hang a roll. Perhaps it was safer at the time to argue about potty protocol than what was really on our minds. To this day I deliberately hang the roll with the paper on the outside, aware that most everyone hangs it the other way. That roll of toilet paper meant more to him than I did.



In February three hundred Oglala Sioux declared the village of Wounded Knee liberated territory. The United States government vowed to review the 1868 treaty.

The next two years of my life saw the distance grow between my husband and myself while Steve and I became good friends. The weekends were filled with riotous revelry, mescaline and marijuana, baseball games, fiddler contests and my children took it all in. Their father came and went in the fog of festivities and we drifted apart with no turning back. I yearned for

my freedom.

One night while we were all stoned on something, talking and watching slides, my husband dragged me up to our bedroom and made sure I was still his by forcing sex on me. I wasn't happy. He knew it and didn't care. I reluctantly submitted, not wanting to cause a scene, embarrassed by my feelings, and afterwards went downstairs to rejoin the rest of my friends. I felt frustrated, as I always did when I couldn't stand up for myself and make my feelings known. I knew that night that my marriage was over.

I had been brought up as a dutiful daughter in a strict and neurotic Jewish household. That wasn't who I really was. My roots were torn from a distant domain and while the tree grew, its branches clipped to conform, the flowers never actually blossomed.

You picked up from your biological mother a sense of the rebel. She was someone who refused to do what she was supposed to do. You need to go back and accept her inability to keep you. Allow yourself to feel the rejection and rebelliousness and recognize that those were her dynamics. Then recognize that is only a small part of your history as a conscious living being moving through many lifetimes and many dimensions.

Psychic Reading, 1983, by Mitra

I needed to talk. When I brought up the book *Open Marriage* again, my husband, lost in his world of narcissism and sports, laughed at me and suggested I talk to somebody. I made an appointment with a family therapist to find out if I was normal.



The administration would not admit that the powerful anti-war movement in the United States had anything to do with stopping the war. "History, as someone has said, is a dull account of wars. Were the people led into them by lies, or did they want to believe the lies so that they'd have an excuse for war? Did they just want to kill? Kill anyone, anywhere? The desire to kill is one of man's explosive and strongest instincts. Civilization is an attempt to guide that instinct into safer channels, such as making machines, goods, and so on. We have substituted business and other competition for war. But there comes a time when the whole thing is blown to hell. Instinct is stronger than civilization or morals or religion. And there are men who know that only too well: politicians, armament makers, presidents, kings, leaders of people. Men who will profit by the people's love for war and who will gain power by it or financial rewards."

✎ 1974 - 1975 ✎

The Senate Watergate hearings were followed by the resignation of President Nixon, the first in American history. On April 29 a hard end finally came in Vietnam and it fell to the Communists.

And a hard end came to my marriage as well. I had tried to conform but couldn't, and the

decision to make divorce a reality was the biggest of my life. My husband moved out of our house leaving me with our three daughters, two cats, one dog, two horses, two chickens and a rooster, and went to live in town with a friend who was also separated from his wife. We fought a lot; our lives were in turmoil. When he told me he had hired a lawyer, I was forced to find one myself. And when I did, he acted surprised and hurt, saying that he really didn't have a lawyer and had just threatened me figuring I would run scared. After fifteen years of marriage he didn't know anything about me.

After divorce proceedings began, my husband insisted I move out of our house thinking it was too big for us. So I found an old Vermont farmhouse, with a vine-covered chimney and peeling white paint. It shocked my two older daughters, a stark departure from what they were used to.

The house itself, well hidden from the road, went on like most Vermont farmhouses do. The staircase creaked when anybody other than the cats crept down it. The fireplace kept the large main room comfortable, while ill-fitting windows 'helped the good Lord heat the outside.' A wonderfully warped hallway floor, oak and aged, led to a tiny back room and porch. Two acres, fenced and flourishing, lush and still, provided a place for a tree house, a dark cave, a quiet corner.

The large modern home which I had so carefully designed and decorated became an empty shell. Steve finally gave up his New York apartment and moved full time into the home he had purchased to be near me.

Going to court was physically and psychologically horrifying. My lawyer, a brow-beater from Burlington, and I sat on one side of the courtroom while my husband and his lawyer, who wore his pants too short having never acknowledged the last three inches of his height, sat on the other. The next hour was a blur of legal maneuvering.

Six months later, after living alone with my three children, we met at the courthouse to finalize the divorce.

My kids now had to accept a different mode of living, with yet another set of standards, as had I after I was told I was adopted. Our divorce wasn't six months old when the children received a call from their father with the news that he had remarried! So they found themselves with a stepmother, Steve's ex-girlfriend no less, just another crisis to add to their already chaotic lives.

✎ 1976 ✎

Americans elected their first "born again" president, former Georgia governor Jimmy Carter. "In Canada, Rene Levesque led the Party Quebecois to victory in Quebec, the first separatist government in North America." "With the election of the Party Quebecois government many Jews decided that it was time to move elsewhere."

HOUSEWIFE TO HIPPY

My saving grace was the ability to escape into some creative endeavor and it was about time to do just that. A friend had offered us her apartment in Taos, New Mexico, for two weeks in December, where Steve and I would finish a script we had been working on before heading to Hollywood for a sale. He had the idea of *The Revenge of the Mad Moose* for a year, a satirical comedy based on man's blind race to destroy the planet through bio-genetic engineering and pesticide poisoning. Wanting to leave the east, we would use this trip as a chance to see if there was somewhere else we could consider as our next home.

After getting the kids comfortable with the babysitter and packing my 1966 Volkswagon van, we left as the northeast fell into a deep freeze. It was 22 below zero at five in the morning, dark and cold. With no fourth gear, and lots of food, we cruised through the Adirondacks, along the back roads of New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Indiana at 40 mph until we hit the freeway in Missouri. With a few thousand miles to go we spent most of our time talking about the "Moose" while I took notes and the script came to life. The welcome truck stops along the way provided a safe overnight respite where we could warm up, get weather reports and wash. The VW bus fulfilled my dream of the Jack Kerouac *On the Road*, save-the-planet sixties, beads-and-feathers type of life - traveling in a van, living with a guy, wearing torn jeans and tight T-shirts. I even let my hair grow long, stopped dying it and quit shaving my legs - no cares in the world, going with the flow and being free. I don't know how free I felt leaving three children at home but I was as free as I was ever going to be.

Oklahoma wasn't like it was in the movies - where the wind comes sweepin' down the plain and the grass smells sweet. It didn't. It whistled through oil derricks against a grey, dull, polluted sky. Across the Texas Panhandle into New Mexico, forever flat and clear, we headed north for the high plains on a bumpy secondary road to Taos, where a hot shower and a soft bed awaited us. We called our friend and left a message with the bartender at the cantina where she sang. Taos, grungy on the outskirts with typical industrial eyesores, improved as we worked our way to the center of town where terracotta adobe shops and wooden planked walks lined the streets surrounding the plaza. At a dimly lit bar a familiar face turned toward us from the far end of the room. She had been waiting for a day and a half thinking we might have changed our minds. After a quick lunch of spicy Mexican food, we followed her to the apartment.

The streets on the edge of town narrowed into lanes and the houses, smooth, pastel pink to beige adobe, thick-walled earthy buildings with recessed windows and arched entrances, stacked and sloped, looked like they held one another up and would melt and disintegrate if it rained. She turned sharply into a graveled courtyard and parked in front of a single-story apartment building. Its shabby interior was comfortable and I liked it.

A Jewish girl from Montreal living with a weird artist from New York in a mud flat in New Mexico writing a screenplay about a mad moose was what my parents had to process when I called

collect from the Taos Hotel pay phone. It didn't seem strange to me because, of course, I was doing what I always wanted. How could they understand? Perhaps my real mother would.

We finally received a letter from Valerie who wrote that things weren't going well. A clash of personalities between Susan and the babysitter necessitated a talk with my rebellious middle child. Nobody understood her like her mother. I was left worried and guilt-ridden, too far away to do anything effective. I pacified my guilt by telling myself I needed this time away to experience some freedom, but I learned quickly that for a mother, freedom is an illusion.

I had walked out on them at a crucial time in their lives hoping that their father would see them on weekends and cover during my absence. He was always complaining about not seeing them enough. Now he had his chance. I could only do what I was capable of doing and smoking dope allowed me to smooth over the raw edges, the unremitting requirements of my kids and my own inadequacies. I lived with their pain, confusion and apprehension every day. The distance gnawed at my insides and our telephone calls left me sad and anxious. I was responsible for them, they depended on me, and nobody else could shoulder that burden. I also knew that we couldn't stay in the east and that I needed to find a home for us.

There was an intense mixture of cultures here - Hispanics, Native Americans, hippies, artists, rednecks, tourists, rich Texans - and although I would have loved to live in Taos, my blonde, light-skinned beautiful daughters would not have fared well. What made us feel at home in this small town was the creativity, the many art galleries, native shops filled with turquoise and silver, silk-screened kachina fabrics, painted pottery, beguiling baskets, bright bold woven blankets and rugs, sand paintings and stone sculptures. We purchased three pifiatas for the kids.

Christmas Eve at the Taos Pueblo was exciting but unsettling and when a drunk Native American walked up waving a bottle of whiskey and smiled, slurring "God Bless Yankee Doodle Dandy," I wanted to disappear. My presence meant one thing to him - hatred of the whites, and even if we weren't all the same, we were to him - intruders, unwelcome and arrogant - and it reminded me of all the trouble in the world today where nobody trusted anybody and ordinary people didn't count. The public had no say in determining the outcome of anything and feelings of impotence made the masses angry and insecure. Native Americans have been trampled into the earth by the whites, forced out and fenced off. As they exited the tiny, white adobe church, marching shoulder to shoulder, firing their guns into the air in unison while making their way slowly around the square in front of their pueblo, I felt threatened and ill-at-ease on their turf, trespassing on their tradition, violating their privacy, invading their ritual.

It was Christmas all over the world and my kids were home alone. They were supposed to spend time with their father but he was always out and about, leaving them by themselves. They had a lot to cope with between his neglect and my absence.

We left Taos in a heavy snowstorm, having decided on a shorter route through the Apache Reservation, keeping us in the mountains. The road faded out of view as the wipers labored

to clear the windshield. Arriving at Monument Valley that evening, the little we could see was enough to excite us for the morning. Cold and tired, we stopped at the only light in the Valley, at the tiny hospital, emptied our bladders in the brush, heated some soup, crawled into our camper bed and watched the sun disappear behind the steep mountainside.

It was dawn when we awoke from a deep, dreamless sleep. After breakfast in the van we traveled the eighteen-mile road through the monuments and gazed at the passage of millions of years etched into mighty columns by the waters of time. It took a dozen rolls of film and most of the morning until the entrance gates materialized on the horizon.

With fine weather and dry roads, we headed west to the Grand Canyon. The day came to an end in the closed Prescott KOA where we found an isolated spot, locked ourselves up for the night and immediately fell asleep.

It didn't matter that it was raining when we awoke because by nightfall we would be in the Golden State where the sun always shines. As we crossed into California, the sun actually came out, just like it was supposed to, and instead of continuing on the freeway which traveled around the San Bernardino mountains, we decided to cross them. It turned out to be a harrowing experience. We climbed, hanging off the edge most of the way, and then hit the Ortega Highway through the Laguna Hills, more of the same. Exhausted we pulled into the parking lot of the playhouse where our friend was in rehearsal. We followed him home to a pretty place across the highway from the ocean and fell asleep in our sleeping bags on the living room hide-a-bed.

It was invigorating to be at the ocean again. The moist sea air softened our cracked, dry skin and we could wear sandals, no socks and still be warm. While I talked about my girls and thought about my plants, our bodies luxuriated in the California sun.

🕊 1977 🕊

Steve Biko, leader of a non-white student movement advocating black consciousness and non-cooperation with whites, was arrested and killed by white South African police.

We were getting lonesome for the kids and, realizing that this Hollywood scene might drag on a little longer than expected, sent them plane tickets for the end of January while starting to look for an apartment.

Two weeks later the girls marched down the airport ramp looking bigger, better and messier than I had remembered, all American Airlines pin-bearers. We hadn't seen each other for six weeks and it was wonderful having them with me again.

That evening we all cooked dinner and the distance between us became apparent. We moved around the house like strangers, talked only when necessary, not looking into one another's eyes, and they carried on as if we weren't there. When I'm alone I dream of having them with me and when we're together I dream about being alone.

The ocean was our first love and our days were spent playing in the sand, skimming on boards in the tide, and enjoying picnics on the beach.

The script was out and it was just as easy to wait at home as it was in L.A. so after three weeks we left the van in California and flew east. The house looked good and the cats were waiting. It was luxurious to sit in front of a blazing fire and sleep in our own beds again. The woodpile had disappeared and the plants were dead. The babysitter had made a beautiful macramé hanging, an apology for the plants.



Mud season in the mountains. The tiresome timetable of school started again and passing grades proved that it could be done. Missing school wasn't the end of the world and there was much to be said for traveling. The troubles with their father persisted.

I came home to reality. Lawyer's letters and more lawyer's letters. It was impossible not to think of my girls and the hardships we were all experiencing. Things were happening over which I had no control. Wasn't it possible to be friends just for the kids' sake? It would seem that putting their needs first should be of the utmost importance.

I felt like I was in a dark hole. I could see the black sides of a tunnel disappearing into the distance with no shades of grey, no hope for light. The desperation growing in me faded as I focused on my children's fearful faces that emerged outside the grim mosaic of my mind. It was going to take time to undo the damage. They are so vulnerable. Aren't we all!



For the past two years most of my ex's support checks had bounced and I wondered why, if he wanted to see his children, he didn't support them. When the bank had called, Valerie and Susan took the message and wondered why their father didn't want to send money for their expenses. When you stop sending support they don't think you're cheap, they just think that something is wrong with them. Along with Steve's help and my odd jobs - sewing repairs and alterations, selling corn from our acre the former owners left, and recycling everything - we managed to keep going.

My sense of your ex is that there is a very deep and strong dislike of women which could come out in any form of abusiveness. It could come out as a rape, or putting a woman down, or making his daughters feel that their womanless is awful. In that way he is raping his daughters of their own femininity, their own self or self-esteem. That's what he has done. You cannot give that back to them except by simply being you. You have to give them time to come to terms with that, to see it, to deal with it and then let them seek you out. Just as you want to seek out your parents. And then when they have a chance to be with you, to observe you, then you can deal with their self-rejection and point out to them when it's appropriate in a very gentle way without accusation, without judgment and without anger, about your ex. When

you have that kind of neutrality it'll work out.

The real issue here is not them. It's what you're feeling. Your self-esteem, your concern as a mother and your feeling about yourself as a woman and a mother in relation to them is what you're struggling with. And what they're struggling with is their karma and they have chosen to perceive and interpret things in a certain way. Those are their choices. You cannot be responsible for that.

Psychic Reading, 1983, by Mitra

I had made a change in my life, one of the first to please myself, and caused so much misery to so many. It was painful to exist.

Bad dreams woke Steve and me along with an electrical storm and torrential rain. We talked into the dawn as lightning lit up the room and the charged atmosphere generated our thought processes into unexplored areas. Like a flash our reality came clear. There was one choice open to us if we were to give everybody a chance to exist peacefully. We had to leave.



Suddenly without warning our world stopped turning. The sheriff's secretary called to tell me her boss would be over in half an hour with papers but couldn't tell me what it was about. The sound of a motor broke the ominous silence and the knock at the door brought me to my feet. The sheriff looked around the room and hesitantly handed me a Petition to Amend the Final Order and Decree with a hearing to be held on Monday at 10:00 a.m. at the courthouse. That was two days from now. He thought it strange that there would be no time for me to get organized. It was all about child support, alimony and visitation rights.

The room was quiet except for the crackling of wood in the fireplace. The only thing left out of our divorce until now was a court case, something I dreaded.

It was close to 7:00 a.m. when the reality of Monday percolated into consciousness and the desire to return to my dream was denied. It was dark with pewter shadows for half-tones and still raining. A feeling of gloom pervaded my space and as my feet touched the cold floor, the dampness made me shiver. The urgency of the morning got me dressed. I could hear the kids preparing for school, always a rush after the weekend.

Lawyers don't end divorces, people do. Our fighting had been going on for two years and we couldn't talk to each other without arguing - the anger, so intense.

The day was anti-climactic. The court gave me time to come up with a defense. The children received a letter from their father explaining why he did it. He told them that the only power he had over me was money and if I signed an agreement to do what he wanted, he would let the money go.

WE DON'T GOT A HOME

Ten days later on a dark and rainy October morning, a taxi arrived at 6:10 a.m. to take us and our nineteen pieces of luggage to the airport. We were on our way back to Los Angeles where Steve had some work and everybody wanted to go except Valerie.

Airports are peculiar, antiseptic, molded, monotonous, strange-smelling, non-human, prosaic places. After a bumpy flight to Boston we had a three-hour wait and time for breakfast at a self-service cafeteria - pancakes with syrup that had nothing natural in it, rubbery muffins, dried-up grapefruit halves, varnished Danish pastries, warm milk, boxed cereals, wrapped cheeses. All the people eating these routine rations had sallow complexions, blank expressions and were grossly overweight. We were used to eating real food - whole wheat bread, fresh fruit and vegetables, herbal teas, and we carried our own honey, raisins and peanut butter.

The gift shops were stocked with souvenirs, miscellaneous magazines, best-sellers, tedious time-consuming games and plastic everywhere. Our flight was called and two hundred and sixty people lined up to board one aircraft. Since we were in the nonsmoking section we had to wait until the smoking section was filled and when we finally embarked, had seats with no windows. The take-off was smooth and as the ground dropped away, we entered another dimension, enclosed in a self-contained cabin with movies, music and food. For the next six hours we could plug into the sounds of our choice until our descent into the land of sunshine, oranges, smog and drought. We were leaving behind the harrowing hostility and our home in the hills - for a little while.

The San Bernardino Mountains pierced the smog as the plane cruised to a halt at LAX, Los Angeles' large, sprawling airport. We retrieved our baggage and tumbled through the automatic sliding doors into the warm California breeze. The high school principal had sent two weeks of work and if necessary I could have a private tutor for the girls. My nose cleared, my joints became more supple and my mind relaxed.

Back east the wheels of the law continued to grind. The scene was getting to us and after two days of intent deliberation, we decided to move west, possibly to Canada. A friend in the business knew a producer in Alberta who put together film deals and might be interested in our "Moose" script. Since we were heading that way to look for a home, why not stop in Calgary to meet a man about a moose?

Sounded good to me.



It was the middle of November when we headed north on the Golden State Freeway to Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks.

Just ahead was Yosemite, where John Muir had wandered alone, living in a tree on bread and water. As we drove around the flank of 13,000' Mt. Dana, the road crested, the sky opened, and suddenly we were at the top of the unsurpassed, unnerving 9,941' Tioga Pass, with a narrow, twisting road that stripped along the sheer mountainside and fell away to nothing. "You don't turn to the right. Just one wrong move and it's gonzo," chirped Elizabeth, wide-eyed, from the back.

Nevada stretched out in the distance below - caramel-pudding mountains, flat wide valleys, distant peaks on the horizon.

At Andy's Restaurant the kids watched with dollar bills in their eyes as the cherries and lemons revolved and the slot machine coughed out \$2.50 in quarters. The KOA was adequate and we slept well as dried fallen leaves rustled against the tent like cat's footsteps. It was cold in the morning. We stopped for breakfast in Winnemucca where slot machines were already busy with people at play, fingers blackened from handling coins. You see that part of America you don't want to see in the casinos at 8:30 in the morning.

We crossed southeastern Oregon and entered Idaho where colder temperatures, intermittent squalls and beautiful scenery greeted us. Nez Perce country, Chief Joseph territory.

The evening news reported that Idaho was in the midst of one of the country's worst snowstorms, Abercrombie and Fitch had closed today and Sadat was visiting Israel.

The snowstorm had moved through during the night and as we drove north the next morning with a hundred miles to go to the Canadian border, a car passed our van and slid off the road. Outside of Bonner's Ferry we had an argument. Valerie complained that Steve was acting like a father. She and Susan were always fighting. I think we were all getting worn out with all the legal stuff going on, the weather and the uncertainty of what lay ahead. They were out of school, away from friends and the comfort of home. Where were we going and what were we going to do when we got there? I knew very clearly what I was doing - running away.

The blowing snow crept across the highway and five miles from the border, the gas pedal started to go. We crossed into Canada and stopped at a garage where the attendant did something and we were on our way again, crawling along at 15 mph towards the Columbia Valley and Cranbrook. The roads were icy, it was still snowing so heavily that we had to strain to see the highway, but we were all anxious to keep going. Forty miles and two and a half hours later we fell into a motel and prepared dinner on our little Coleman stove. Being back in Canada made me feel that I had returned home after a very long absence. We were going to find a place and settle down for a while. It was far away from trouble and I wanted to breathe easy and give the girls a taste of the country of their birth. We were Canadians and perhaps the feeling of having roots would make a difference.

By morning it had stopped snowing but the temperature had dropped to minus 12 degrees and the van was frozen solid. A "Husky" mechanic towed it to his garage and while the van was

being repaired, we shopped for warm pajamas and turtlenecks.

After driving through massive mountains and rocky canyons of Kootenay National Park, we arrived in Banff and found a hotel. "Is it dinner out on the town or dinner at home?" asked Steve wearily. "We don't got a home," replied Elizabeth.

The next morning we rented a car because the van wouldn't start - it was just too cold - and drove around looking for a place to rent. This was a ski town and the people were used to short-term, high-priced rentals. Nothing for us.

We finally left for Calgary and our appointment with the producer, who had driven two hundred miles from Edmonton to meet us. While the kids watched TV in our hotel room, he and Steve went over the script, discussing cameras, lenses and equipment. He was going to present the script to his investors but we knew it was all talk until the money was in the bank.

Undecided where to go, I called a friend from back east who was now living in Sun Valley, Idaho. She remarked that there were no trees where she was and suggested we try Jackson Hole. I had strange feelings leaving Canada where hopes of settling down in the country we had left so many years ago were shattered, but there was no place for us to live.

Just south of the border the rain turned to ice on the windshield and we were forced to stop in Shelby, a small town in northern Montana. Black ice is what the TV and truckers said the morning would bring, but we kept going anyway. The snow didn't stop until, after a long, slow drive, we cruised into Montana's capital city of Helena and decided to stay the night. After pizza we swam in the pool and discovered that Thanksgiving had happened yesterday.

Luck was with us when the sun shone the next morning and we left the thru-way for a secondary mountain road. Rocks glued to steep hillsides and the first dark green we had seen for days appeared where trunks and roots of trees reached over boulders for the closest bit of soil. It turned warm and the snow had melted leaving only white peaks. After having driven four hundred miles to Idaho Falls, we decided to try for Jackson after the man at the garage told us the roads were dry. About a half hour later, a large sign welcomed us to big, wild, wonderful Wyoming, and we were knee-deep in snow, ice and rain. The snow continued for the next seventy-five miles until, exhausted, we crept into town at 10 mph. and fell into the first motel on the outskirts. It was the 28th of November.

LIFE IN A LOG CABIN

The receptionist at the motel sent us to another motel where the owner, perceiving our predicament, rented us, at a very reasonable rate, a small log cabin behind the main building. The girls started school the next day after being away for a month and a half.

We stayed at the motel for one week until we found the only place left to rent in the valley, a fancy condo seven miles north of town in Grand Teton National Park, out in the middle of nowhere and surrounded by sagebrush as far as the eye could see.

This was our first Christmas away from home. We drove into the National Forest, climbed through hip-deep snow and picked out a beautiful tree. The presents gradually multiplied and excitement was beginning to surface.

❖ 1978 ❖

The first test-tube baby was born in England through the method called "in vitro fertilization." Twenty thousand tons of hazardous waste were dumped into sites located in Niagara Falls. Over fifty per cent of the children subsequently born at Love Canal, a suburb across from the Falls, were born with birth defects. The Kushi Institute was founded as a macrobiotic educational center in Brookline, Massachusetts.

After the children told their father we were looking for a place to settle out west, he was suddenly willing to give up his support reduction claims if I would agree to his proposed visitation schedule. We had been arguing about the same thing for three years. What was the point of all these negotiations except to keep the divorce from becoming a reality? I walked out on everybody today. There was too much pressure in the house.

Being outside alleviated the tension, the wind made me aware of the weather, a patchwork of snow and ice forced me to concentrate on my walking and some tears added to the drama as I walked west towards the river. I was feeling too much of a load.

I didn't think I was missing much by being in Wyoming. The phone didn't ring as often with disturbing calls. But it was those raw ends from being uprooted, so firm in the home I loved, that were so sensitive. Getting used to new soil would take time. My roots had been rent before when torn from my mother at birth, and this was a repercussion of that initial trauma. It had left me confused, hypersensitive and needy, somewhat the same as then.

I didn't smile or laugh much anymore. Life had all gotten so serious. Dealing with lawyers wasn't fun. Dealing with your feelings wasn't either. Maybe I was just angry at everybody because we were too busy pleasing each other instead of ourselves. I seemed to fall into that role easily. Sometimes I just wanted to be without responsibilities.

Finally everybody was sleeping. It was dark and quiet and the condo creaked in the cold. Steve and I were losing strength and seemed to be growing apart. We didn't talk much, it was almost a bother at times. When we did, it was about splitting although it would have been inconvenient. Not being married makes it easier to leave.

I had worked on a fire but it petered out. A quilt kept me warm as I sat in the dark looking out into blackness. It was still, the only sound the distant cannon shots bombing the mountain for avalanche control booming across the valley. I longed for home, the comfortable couch in front of the drafty fireplace, the silly old half-painted kitchen and the privacy of my own bedroom. I wondered if the kids felt the same. This place was very beautiful, quiet and a good spot to rest. However, you take your problems wherever you go and with the telephone and airline schedules, one wasn't far enough from anywhere. The last ski jacket emerged from the dryer and my work for the day was over.



Everything was white with no delineation between the road and the rest of the land, faint silhouettes of hills and buttes, trees dotted with snow. Elk were grazing close by. The world seemed more peaceful covered in snow.

Beethoven matched the countryside and as I listened to the Fifth, low clouds dragged shadows across the untracked valley floor and two moose slowly moved through the deep snow, munching on willows just beyond our window. Fourteen inches of light Jackson Hole powder had fallen during the night and the sun was shining. Suddenly the ring of the telephone pierced the quiet morning mood. Office hours had started long ago in the east. My lawyer wanted to reopen the case and the tightness in my gut increased and twisted into a hard knot. All I wanted to do this morning was ski, while it snowed and the mountains were still, sounds fading into the flakes, and all you could hear was the wind in your ears.



We found a small log cabin and tiny bunkhouse in the southern end of the valley - a four-year-old, beautiful rustic native house with vaulted ceiling, leaded glass windows, a bedroom, loft and bathroom with a claw-foot tub. And at the beginning of April we packed our things and moved to our cabin. Although it was sparse living and made us feel hollow, we slowly started to settle into life in this far western oasis, away from the turmoil back home.



When school was over we left our home in Wyoming for a drive cross country and headed east through Yellowstone. The campground at Grant Village was closed but in use and crowded by 6:30 p.m. A bear walked around the tent while we held our breath. About twenty miles east of Buffalo I noticed that the Rockies were fading in the distance and felt strange leaving, although the Tetons would remain clearly in my mind's eye until our return. The Black

Hills National Forest, the town of Custer and a stop at Mt. Rushmore left us gazing up at the carved features of Presidents Washington, Jefferson, Teddy Roosevelt and Lincoln, while having a bite in the cafeteria. We continued to Rapid City, Buffalo Gap National Grassland and the Badlands, where giant sand castles, arid and unreal, stretched as far as the eye could see. A bird flew alongside the van, a rabbit lay dead in the middle of the highway, and we looked for buffalo as we drove through gentle country where grasses blew in the wind like the shimmering coat of a grizzly heading uphill. We had traveled our first thousand miles.

Friday bloomed warm and sunny. We passed through Lake Winnebago, close to the eastern border of Wisconsin, and drove to Kewaunee on Lake Michigan to catch the ferry in the morning. It was midnight when Valerie, Steve and I, exhausted, put up the tent while the younger girls slept in the van. At 7:00 a.m. we boarded and after four hours and a rough crossing with doors slamming as the boat rocked back and forth, we disembarked at Interlocked, proceeded up into the northern reaches of the state and crossed the bridge into Canada at Sault Ste. Marie. Through the coal capital of Sudbury, North Bay, Pembroke, Ontario to 75 miles to Montreal. A hazy day and as we approached the city after having driven 2339 miles across country, I found a hornet stuck on the side of my jeans. All I could think of was what my mother had once said while visiting me. "You've been a thorn in my side." What a strange welcome to the city and my mother. I couldn't help but think this inauspicious incident held some profound wisdom, a reminder that all was not as well as I thought, that my mother had not changed and wouldn't suddenly be the all-welcoming, unconditionally-loving, warm wonderful woman I would have liked her to be.

A DAUGHTER'S DECEPTION

We arrived back in the Green Mountains on the twenty-first of June after a brief visit with my parents in Montreal and started the garage sale two days later. It takes a few healthy moves to realize that you don't need it all.

We were selling everything and taking only our necessities. Memories, saved for so long, were tagged. Baskets and barrels of belongings. Things crawled out of cubbyholes, cupboards emptied out, and shelves were swept clean. We were shedding our layers, peeling them off, parting with possessions to go lightly into the mountains where one could live more quietly and anonymously.



The weekends ran into weeks and after a month and a half of steady selling, we were ready to leave for the west when something bizarre and unexpected happened. When Valerie and Susan returned from their father's house they seemed to be having a difficult time and as I watched my two older daughters sitting in the grass in deep conversation, I knew something was up. They finally entered the kitchen and Susan dropped the bomb. They had decided not to return to Wyoming. I was stunned. My insides shook as I stared at them sitting at the kitchen table. Elizabeth tugged at my T-shirt and told me that she wanted to stay with me. I wouldn't have thought of leaving her. Once again I was faced with that old monster, rejection, and not having dealt with it before, there was no way I was going to be able to handle it now. Elizabeth had disappeared while I stood transfixed in disbelief, staring at my elder daughters, hating them for their decision, and wondering what was happening to my family. I found my youngest daughter in the bathroom crying inconsolably because her sisters were deserting her.

In the midst of this mess, the minister who had helped me home from the hospital, after my accident five years earlier, stopped by. I stared at him through the screen door and knew that God had sent his trusty servant to help with this hopeless situation. He advised me unequivocally to give up my children because they were of age and if asked by a judge they would have chosen to stay with their father. I would have to find a way to exist without my two older daughters. He also warned me that I might have a nervous breakdown as a result of the turn of events. It was more normal for a mother and her children to remain together.

Valerie was promised she could finish her high school year with her friends, Susan could go to private school, and Elizabeth might have been overlooked.

All our belongings were lined up in boxes along the living room wall. The next day Susan and Valerie separated their things from ours and while they waited for their father, Elizabeth, Steve and I went for a drive because I didn't want to be there when they left. When we returned, the girls were gone. A few hours later a letter arrived from our bank in Wyoming that his last child support check had been canceled.

The garage sale was over and we were ready to leave. The next day Valerie and Susan came over to say goodbye. I felt distant, anxious, unloved and unloving. With 2278 miles ahead of us it was going to be a sad, lonely, long drive.



When the realization hit that I had lost my kids, I crumbled, cried a lot and spent most of my time sitting by the potbelly stove staring into space. When Elizabeth came home from school every day she would sit on my lap, cup my face in her hands and stare into my eyes waiting for a smile or some recognition that I was there. I tried hard to be present but knew my focus was afar. My art, a light in the darkness of this heartbreaking human drama, was my lifeboat. The most excruciating pain was in the awareness that it was out of my hands. Helpless again, I felt displaced, uprooted, alien. I was re-experiencing my primal tragedy of being separated from my birth mother. There was a hole in my heart. I was devastated.

A few weeks later a letter arrived from my lawyer. There seemed to have been a change in custody and the support factor. But I didn't need a lawyer anymore. I lost!

Years later I was to see that because of my emotional immaturity and personal problems, I couldn't help my children when they needed advice and support after the divorce. I was jealous that they had chosen to stay with their father and couldn't overcome my resentment to guide them. I just wasn't strong enough. Because of their rejection, I rejected them. I had to save myself from drowning.

I felt my insides twist when I thought about my missing girls. As the hours and days and months passed, I realized how blessed I was to have Elizabeth and Steve, always beside me coaxing me to come back when I seemed far away. My mind drifted to nowhere, but as long as my hands were busy, my life went on. And so I continued to chop marble and create life. All things must pass. This would too.

✎ 1979 ✎

At Three Mile Island in Pennsylvania a nuclear power plant came close to meltdown. The radiation was denied by officials but stories of mutated vegetation, livestock unable to give birth and reddened skin persisted. *The China Syndrome* came out 12 days before this tragedy and when the meltdown happened people panicked. Robert Benton's *Kramer vs. Kramer* encapsulated the reality of a decade in which the rate of divorce was higher than ever before.



At the end of May we opened a tiny gallery in a funky area just off Jackson's Town Square that had retained the flavor of old Jackson. I worked outside in the courtyard, chopping marble,

while Steve manned the place. There were other artisans working and displaying their wares giving the area a festive feeling.

Susan called to tell me she and Valerie had decided to visit. I booked airline tickets and a week later Elizabeth and I drove the two hours to the Idaho Falls airport to pick them up. It must have taken a lot for my two daughters to come because they were very quiet all the way home. My heart went out to them. It took a few days until they started to talk about the situation at home, the loneliness, isolation and utter lack of communication. Their father and stepmother were absorbed with their own problems and the children were on their own.

My daughters and I filled our backpacks and left for three days of hiking in the Tetons. Steve dropped us off at the Death Canyon trailhead and waved goodbye as if he'd never see us again. Elizabeth was eleven, Susan, fourteen, Valerie, sixteen, and I, thirty-eight. Being in the mountains might allow us to recapture some familial warmth that had been smothered over the last few months. This first trip reinforced our enthusiasm for hiking in the wilderness together and re-established our love for one another that seemed to wear thin during long absences. When they left after ten days, I knew it would be a long time before we would see one another again.

I received a letter from my ex saying he was going for custody of the girls and was after Elizabeth. Nine days later Susan called from my parents' house in Montreal and it all came out. He had taken the girls to court and gotten custody after promising them they wouldn't have to go before the judge and speak against me. What could have been said that was so incriminating to take children away from their mother?

"The law recognizes the mother's claim as supreme unless she is proven unfit." ¹

My father was shocked. I was sick to my stomach. In the next five days the girls called repeatedly as well as the minister, who was taken aback at the turn of events. This was an indelible scar on our family psyche from which we would all suffer forever.

Their day in court would forever plague them on all levels of their being. Even if we tried to love one another, it would always get in the way and I would eventually be blamed for what they were forced to do by a man who in their hearts could do no wrong. Whatever they were coerced into saying would be forgotten in time, but their guilt feelings would engender a deep resentment towards me, Elizabeth and finally Steve. Would they ever be mature enough to realize that even if one initiated the divorce, the other was part of the cause? But living in a patriarchal society, we mothers don't count. Fathers can lie, steal, or cheat, and still come up smelling like roses. Most men don't understand a mother's importance in her children's lives.

At the beginning of September the Sheriff appeared at my door with papers - again. He apologized but he had to do his job. A week later I sent a letter to the court back east in hopes of it doing some good.

I knew if I didn't go he would get everything he wanted and maybe finally leave us alone. He was a fighter and had the energy for this. I didn't.



He won - elimination of the support money he owed for the past four and a half years, as well as alimony past due and future. Now maybe we would be left alone. But in order for that to happen he would have to grow up and learn to deal with his life. I would have been naive to think that this was the end.

✎ 1980 ✎

Ronald Reagan was elected president. Mount St. Helens erupted with 500 times the energy of the Hiroshima bomb. John Lennon was shot and killed in New York City. Cinema legend Alfred Hitchcock died.

I received a letter from my ex stating he wanted Elizabeth to visit or he'd send the Sheriff. I didn't want her to go for fear he wouldn't send her back as he had done with her sisters. In the back of my mind was the feeling that when she was old enough to get on a plane by herself to come home when she wanted, if things got bad, then she could visit her father. It would have to be on her terms. However, the older girls knew there was an open invitation to come west whenever they could. Suddenly Susan called to tell me she would arrive on June 1.

She started the job I found for her at a nearby stable. As the summer progressed we were having a difficult time with her. I never did well walking on eggs in my own home and trying to balance my life with Steve with being a mother to her was madness. She was stubborn, antagonistic, and it wasn't often that we reached common ground. Her motives were mixed, because she had an agenda I knew nothing about. I yearned for the little girl with whom I had spent so much time in an attempt at guidance and understanding. All that was gone. The walls were up and an alien being had surfaced.

Steve and I had been together for seven years. He had stood by me through everything and I knew I had his total support, something I had never experienced in a relationship before. He too had his past to contend with - two divorces, an estranged daughter, and now my children who found in him a scapegoat. Everybody blamed him for taking me away from my husband, implying I had nothing to do with it. I had a hard time existing with such ignorance but didn't have the wherewithal to pin it down, to stand up for him as he had for me and make my children understand that I had been unhappy with their father. I got angry and impatient with Steve when he made an attempt to straighten the kids out and remained afraid to reprimand my children for fear of losing their love.

I couldn't tolerate the trouble at home any longer and, distraught and confused, drove into town with Elizabeth to find a motel. Amid the chaos all she wanted was a place with a pool. Out of the mouths of babes. Elizabeth brought a smile to me when I so desperately needed some levity in my life. All the motels were too expensive and I returned home, dejected and lost.

Talk about dysfunction.

Because of the trouble with Susan I called Valerie; she was to visit in August and I told her not to come. I couldn't deal with any more disorder. Having survived the divorce, although that was questionable, and living with Elizabeth and Steve alone for so long, my defenses were down and I wasn't as quick at avoiding the onslaught of abuse and blame. Elizabeth and I both cried about not seeing Valerie and I finally changed my mind. I couldn't close the door on Valerie like my mother had on me. She was getting a ride west and, on the designated day, I drove two hundred miles to meet her. The three girls were back together and all they did was fight. There was so much friction in the house, along with their father's constant phone calls, we couldn't relax long enough to figure things out. I couldn't deal with so many egos and emotions, raw and revengeful, full of love as well as hate, torn bonds, obligations. How can one sort it all out? Marijuana helped but must have clouded my perception to some degree. It was my only comfort. Things didn't seem so terrible when I was stoned. The children didn't have that luxury.



I had been looking for an alternative school for Elizabeth for years and finally found one in Nehalem, Oregon. Because she had grown increasingly unhappy under the oligarchal American school system, with its institutional, unwholesome cafeteria lunches, overemphasis of mindless sports and brainwashing of the country's history and politics regardless of the rest of the world, Elizabeth, who had always loved school, suffered. She hated to board the bus every morning because the ride was violent with big kids kicking the small ones. Her homework was a repetition of past years. I hated to see her unhappy when I believed school could be wonderful.

"With schools increasingly failing to function as anything more than job training and behavior modification centers ..." ²

In Oregon, we rented one of the last beach shacks left on the coast, with a porch just off the sand where the water rose around the lower stairs at high tide. Elizabeth started at the "Farm," an eighteen-mile ride down the narrow twisting coastal highway. There were only a few children when we arrived, none her age, and the woman who had been its impetus, the one with whom I had corresponded, had left. The school seemed to be falling apart but having rented our cabin in Wyoming and come so far, we decided to stay. Everybody smoked as much dope as we did and the meetings, conducted while a joint was passed around, fit in well with our lifestyle at the time. Here was the first time we heard of macrobiotics, a grain-based diet with vegetables, nuts and seeds as secondary dishes. When the school closed a few months later I decided to home-school Elizabeth for the rest of the year. We worked mornings, spent afternoons at the beach and generally smoked our way through the gravity of our lives.

❖ 1981 ❖

Because of Reagan's huge military budget, a national movement against nuclear weapons with women in the forefront was initiated. AIDS was recognized in the USA. Prince Charles

and Lady Diana Spencer were married.

We returned to Wyoming from the coast and were fortunate to find a larger gallery space in the same area of town.

Valerie called to tell me that she had graduated from high school and wasn't getting along with her father. Not willing to stay any longer than necessary, she left before the ceremonies and along with three of her friends headed west for California where they would share an apartment and get jobs. I heard from the girls a number of times but there was no visit that summer.

As the season slowed, I left for Oregon alone, to meet Elizabeth after she spent two weeks at a traveling camp in the Cascades. Steve and I weren't getting along because of the relentless family friction with which we were involved and it would be a good time to take a break. Valerie had flown from California to the Boise, Idaho airport where we met that evening and slept in the van in a pull-off outside of La Grande. We all ended up at the beach shack for a few weeks together and to pack up the possessions we had left before returning to Jackson for the summer.

This place by the ocean, where the roar of the waves outweighed Bach and Beethoven, was conducive to solitude. Steve asked if it was exciting to be with my daughters again. It was always easier being with them alone but I found Valerie insensitive sometimes and felt her hostility. She subconsciously blamed me for the divorce and for having disrupted her life. She thought I was too sensitive, over-protective of Elizabeth, and was critical of me on every account.

Susan didn't come. I once told her we had to see each other at least once a year but we made no effort this time. As a young mother, before divorce and reality came to call, I thought my children and I would live together forever.

Ten days later Steve called and said he wanted to be alone for a while longer. He hadn't been by himself for a long time and being away from family, mine specifically, was doing him a lot of good. Our relationship had definitely suffered.

We spent our days between the health food store and the beach where we collected sand dollars - flat, grey, circular sea urchins, wedged into the sand as the tide receded. It was three weeks later when I called Steve to warn him we were coming home. I would somehow work it out, aware that my family struggles were definitely driving us apart.

I dropped Valerie off at the bus station in Portland and continued on, driving through the night into a stunning sunrise. We finally made it to Jackson and stumbled into our comfortable cabin, a little apprehensive of what we might find as far as a warm welcome.

I spoke to the girls several times during the next two months and things didn't sound good. They seemed lost and unhappy. I was extremely saddened at the alienation of my children. The

drugs soothed my psyche, hypnotized my heart and hushed the nagging feeling into a false belief that things were better than they were.

WINTER IN THE WILDERNESS

Elizabeth and I moved into a small log cabin at White Grass Ranch while Steve remained in our house for the winter. We had been arguing and needed some time alone. I wanted to make my own decisions, to feel more independent, and he wanted to live by himself. I understood. So did he. I had always had a secret desire to live at White Grass ever since I was told that Frank Galey, the owner, occasionally rented his cabins for the winter. Even if it was difficult getting in and out, I didn't care. Neither did Elizabeth. Frank loved my print of a grizzly that his wife had bought him for his birthday and when I asked about a cabin he tried to strike a bargain - a few month's rent for my grizzly stone. I couldn't do that because it was the plate from which I took my prints. He finally agreed to our living there but getting Elizabeth to school would be my responsibility.



A moose was on the ridge above the road as we reached the fork that took us to the trailhead at Death Canyon and White Grass Ranch. Patches of snow dotted the pavement now lined with poles for the snowplows. The leaves were falling, their colors slightly faded, and the majestic Grand Teton glowed in the setting sun. We unloaded the van and started a fire in the Franklin stove. Elizabeth went to sleep early because we had to be up in time for her to catch the school bus at 7:30, a six-mile drive to Park Headquarters in Moose. The stars seemed closer and the snow on the mountain peaks mirrored the moon's reflection of the sun. The crackling of wood and the soft whistle of the wind around the cabin was all I heard. An occasional clang of a bell. The air was crisp and the sheets were cold.

The next morning a porcupine and a moose greeted us on the way to our half-frozen van parked a hundred yards from the cabin. It creaked over the bumpy, rutted, hard-packed road as we headed for the gate and the outside world. The windshield, etched with a frosty, forest landscape, took more than a mile to clear. Driving in semi-darkness we reached the flats while the eastern sky brightened. A moose and her calf were silhouetted against the luminescence of the cold morning, their steaming bodies creating a vaporous aura. We arrived in time to see the bright lights of the approaching bus in the side mirror, a welcome sight for the long line of kids that had been waiting in the cold.

Frank told us to collect as much of the dried, fallen branches around the ranch as we wanted. "We get seven feet of snow around here," he boasted. The porch was getting heavy with wood but not heavy enough. I was determined to gather enough wood for the long winter ahead.

By mid-morning the sun was hot, the mountains clear enough to be three-dimensional, the pond in front of the cabin rippled by an occasional breeze while the ranch horses drifted back and forth. For the moment the woodpile had stopped growing and mounds of marble chips were collecting around my sculpture table. I was looking for an image in a fifty-pound piece of Italian alabaster. The hours passed as I studied the stone, trying visually to clear away the

excess and release the form.

At 4:00 p.m. I left for Moose, one of the most beautiful school bus stops in the world at the entrance of Grand Teton National Park. Sparse clouds appeared where it was blue before; snow had been predicted. My hands were cold but not enough for gloves. I loved this ride and pulled off the road to look at the Tetons. The yellow aspen leaves had gone leaving predominantly dark green conifers and I could see clearly into the canyons. A few pickups passed, then it was quiet again. For a fleeting moment I thought I might have missed the bus, the mountains having enveloped my thoughts. But no, there it was ... I was a mother again.

On the 27th of October I was forty-one. Birthdays bring the world to your doorstep. My two older daughters called, one from the east, the other from the west. Even though it had been six years since the divorce, it was still going on, the same stories, the same wounds. I felt the time acutely and my realization of our estranged relationships sharpened. I listened, attempted not to become involved, said goodbye ... and suffered for three days.

Morning was magic in the mountains. The dry logs caught quickly and we ate breakfast by the crackling fire. Elizabeth scraped a thin stubborn layer of ice off the windshield while I warmed the van. During our drive a huge elk leapt across the road to join four others on the hill as we slowed down and stopped to watch.

The sun wasn't up yet but the massive mountain chain was brilliant against a cloudless sky. Suddenly the meadows turned gold and shadows appeared, stretching toward the west. The glistening, frosty landscape was gone and the icy aspens soaked up the first rays of the only infallible heating system on the planet. This side of the world was awakening. It was 7:30 a.m. when I arrived home. From the porch I could hear the wind in the canyons although all was still by the cabin. I was glad my birthday was over.

We had been at the ranch for three weeks and by my measurements there were two and a half cords of stacked wood. Most of the dry stuff could be broken by smashing it against a large log. Only the thick pieces had to be sawed and our two-man handsaw worked well, keeping us warm on those overcast chilly autumn afternoons. The neatly piled wood made me feel secure against the cold. Another cord and a half should do it.

Hi deal so much with my fuel - what with finding it, loading it, conveying it home, sawing and splitting it - get so many values out of it, am warmed in so many ways by it, that the heat it will yield when in the stove is of a lower temperature and a lesser value in my eyes - though when I feel it I am reminded of all my adventures." ¹

When we awoke the next morning the eastern sky over Sleeping Indian Mountain was streaked with red, fading to mauve in the north while the mountains still slumbered in the west. As we left the ranch, the colors fused, becoming orange and pink, and as they stretched across the valley to the west, the range awoke to a background of soft hues, an echo of the east. The clouds gave dimension to the peaks, washing the wilderness with warm red. It was cold. The pond had frozen over and the once mirrored surface was etched with an icy panorama. The

wood became more important as the days passed without snow and we felt compelled to saw, break and keep stacking it on the porch.

Without television, we read, talked and played music; my favorites: Von Weber's Clarinet Quintet in B flat major, Opus 34 and Vivaldi's Four Seasons with James Galway on the flute; Elizabeth's: the Rossini Overtures to "The Barber of Seville" and "William Tell."

The next morning I awoke just after 5:00 a.m. It was dark and not as cold as usual. Then I heard the rain. Quietly I started a fire. Last night we had slept in a double down bag on the living room floor beside the fireplace because it was cold everywhere else. Both of us had fallen asleep at 9:00 p.m., Elizabeth having read *The Emperor's New Clothes*, and I, about the Himalayas, Marco Polo sheep and snow leopards. George Schaller's *Stones of Silence* lay beside me on the floor and with an hour to read I picked the group up where I had left them, struggling through the virginal valley of Hunza.

Elizabeth's homework for her chemistry quiz was conquered at breakfast and everything we had reviewed hopelessly last night was incredibly clear this morning. It was dusky outside and wet. The mountains were gone and the valley was shrouded in mist as if a huge silk had been stretched over it. Without the sun's glare the subtle shades of sagebrush glowed. There were reds in the landscape and the familiar grey fence was dark brown, silhouetted against an ochre meadow. The air was filled with the sound of rain. When I returned, the cabin was cozy, the coals hot, and the pot catching the drip in the doorsill told me when the rain slowed. I doused the fire to listen.

When Zarathustra was thirty he went into the mountains for ten years. He was alone and happy. I had been at the cabin for one month - alone and happy - reading, sculpting, photographing and writing. Sometimes resisting the seclusion, I would get the urge to talk to somebody, to know there was comfort close by. The feeling would wear off gradually and I would come to realize where I was, what I was doing and that the choice was mine as to what I wanted to do next, if anything.

Elizabeth called. We were going to meet in town in late afternoon. She had been at a friend's since Friday. I couldn't remember the last time I had been totally alone. It was strange - no demands, no requests, nobody tugging at my apron strings. I walked around the room not knowing what to do. There was an emptiness without Steve and Elizabeth. Having grown up alone, I always wished I had siblings and now I wanted to share my time with people I loved. That's one of the reasons I had children.

My slides of the gray jays at the window feeder had finally arrived and I was carving them in marble, after setting my three-dimensional piece aside for the time it takes to develop another perspective. The light was flat, good to work by.



One morning we awoke to a wonderful white world. I started a fire while Elizabeth made

breakfast and wondered whether we were going to make it to the bus. If we couldn't get out we would have to move back home. The Park Service plowed the road to the ranch, but if there was a kid who had to get to school, the county had to get them there. And so the Park and county went to war as to whose responsibility it was. The owners of the ranch just wanted their road plowed and didn't care who did it. I certainly understood and didn't want to upset their lives. It was up to us to get to the bus.

Over six inches of soft, wet, untracked snow awaited us on the road, but my fears were forgotten as it was easily negotiated and we arrived on time. I would take each morning as it came and remember to carry our cross-country skis, shovel and chains. Having been raised in Quebec, I had lived with snow, hard winters and bad driving most of my life.



After spending a few days with Steve, he joined us and we all returned to the cabin at White Grass for Thanksgiving and were amazed to find, after chaining up in Moose, two feet of snow, no path, no place to park and a most beautiful world. Loaded with traditional treats we skied to the cabin and settled in just as it got dark. It was good to be back. There was a definite difference living in a remote area nothing to listen to besides the beat of my heart, the pulse of the earth and the two daily jets arriving and departing with people looking for the quiet and beauty that I love and find here in the wilderness.

The morning brought blue skies, hot sun and the smell of turkey in the oven. Fresh untracked snow, regal firs robed in white, a trip across a meadow on our skis, wind in our faces, moose in the willows. The ordinary household candles glowed in their silver candlesticks, the partially jelled cranberries lost their mold, the chestnut-stuffed organic turkey occupied the place of honor, and an ivory lace tablecloth with last year's cranberry stains provided the background for this feast. As we sat at the table, so full of so much, we gave thanks. It snowed lightly during dinner ... and the card game ... and the night. The temperature dropped to twelve degrees. Winter had set in.



The short holiday weekend passed quickly as did the first few weeks of December. I didn't remember experiencing so many storms or seeing so much snow since my years in Quebec. It was too dark to see what the thermometer read as I stepped into my skis and headed for the van. My high-beam flashlight pierced the blackness searching for moose. Storms coming in from the Pacific and cold Canadian winds had blown over Wyoming toward the plains. The snow was hip-deep and crept onto the porch covering our well-stacked woodpile. As we headed out, a slight hint of light appeared in the eastern sky. Elizabeth and I made plans to meet in town for last-minute Christmas shopping.

Skiing back to the cabin, I watched as the sky, splashed with red, magenta, yellow and gold, turned the snow pink. I stopped to listen ... everything reflected the glory of dawn. It was at times like this that world news didn't matter; my problems weren't worth the time I spent on

them; I was glad for the mercilessness of mountain life because it kept the crowds away; one must never be lazy about her woodpile; and it was worth wearing long underwear and two pairs of socks from now on.

The winter solstice, the longest night of the year, was over. The wheel had turned yet again, and as humanity stood at the threshold of a new year I was deeply conscious that we were also standing on the threshold of a New Age. Never before have the stakes been so high. The choices we make will determine whether our future ends in planetary annihilation or begins an era of infinite potential. It all depends on what we choose to believe in. We have developed our minds and technology; now let us feel our hearts and our love.



Steve was spending Christmas with us at the ranch. Because of the holiday there was no routine, we could sleep late and miss a sunrise, maybe a moose. We had time for whole-wheat pancakes with warm maple syrup, and time to play, a forgotten sport in today's world of computerized games and televised broadcasts. There was nothing to do but wait for morning and talk about the treasures under the tree. It started snowing during the night, continuing all day into evening, steadily falling snow that slowly crept up to cover the top rung of the fence and the entrance to our cabin. Our well-trampled path had disappeared.

It was still snowing in the morning. We had our turkey dinner last night because turkey sandwiches on Christmas Day were more exciting. After opening our presents, each a true surprise, an almost impossible accomplishment in our family, we went out to play in the snow ... snow that blew off the palm of our hands, snow that you could sit in, getting neither wet nor cold. It was strange to think of a world ten feet below, like walking on stilts. It reminded me of my childhood growing up in Montreal where the winters were as long as they were here. Wonderful days of winter ... making angels in the snow, playing marbles on the covered sidewalks in front of our house. We had shoveled four feet of snow off the roof and planned to lunch up there when the sun came out.

The rest of the world seemed far away. The President wanted everybody to light a candle in their windows for peace but the electric company wanted it to be an electric candle. It was a time for giving, a time for sharing and a season of memories, warm and bold, sad and haunting, a few precious moments when strangers smile at one another, and all across the world, peace is dreamed of, and even in the darkest hearts a child's smile can wake a feeling nearly lost.

✎ 1982 ✎

Queen Elizabeth II proclaimed the Constitution Act making Canada a fully sovereign nation. She was uncomfortable with the fact that Quebec had been left out of the constitutional accord. Almost a million people gathered in Central Park, New York City, to declare their resoluteness in bringing the arms race to an end. This was the largest political demonstration in U.S. history.

Storms moved in day after day and high winds filled every cranny until the once contoured landscape was flat and white. The cabin's rear windows were buried. My stones of the gray jays and the chickadees were finished and I started carving a western meadowlark, a pretty bird that sings a pretty song. A January thaw melted the snow on the roof creating icicles that grew to meet the high banks surrounding the cabin. The glazed surface of the snow glistened in the moonlight but made it difficult for horses and humans to move around. Our skis broke the surface and then sank into the soft snow so we couldn't drag them up again. Paths were the only way to get around and we shoveled our way to the van and cleared a small area about the cabin.

A hot, clear day baked our skin while Elizabeth and I skied the few miles to Phelps Lake, frozen solid and covered in snow. We brushed off a huge, gnarled root so we could sit and enjoy the view, and talked about our winter in the wilderness, deciding this was a place in which we could live for the rest of our lives. She thought it more of a challenge to exist like this. So did I. The trip down was intense - wind in our faces, blowing snow, the relaxation of gliding effortlessly. Cruising through the herd of horses at the ranch, Elizabeth couldn't pass her favorite pony without a hug and a few words of love. Home for goose eggs on rice, a picnic in the snow, history homework and a marble meadowlark.



Our stay in the wilderness was coming to an end. In a few weeks we would be moving back to the screeching of cars, the sugar-induced screaming of school children - more noise and movement than was necessary in our lives. Oh, for a mountain paradise to be able to listen to that inner voice that needs quiet to be heard.



At the beginning of May Susan called to let us know she wanted to spend the summer with us. Six days later she had changed her mind to half a summer. She never made it out at all. But Valerie turned up and I got her a job working for the ski hill at the top of the tram.

I received a long letter from Susan. She started by telling me to brace myself because I wasn't going to like it. It was a mother's nightmare. She wrote that when she went away to school she had left a life she couldn't handle. After taking a few swipes at me which always eased her pain, she said she didn't care to hear me talk badly of her father, and even though they were in disagreement at the moment, that didn't alter her respect for him.

That's what a terrible divorce does to children. It makes them choose sides, forces them to go to court and say things that would haunt them for the rest of their lives. How does a child face the fact that she left her mother? No child can. In order to survive, the blame is shifted to the party that left. In this case, me. In her eyes, if I were guilty, then her decision to stay with her father was correct, and the responsibility of forcing her to make that decision, mine. She could thus blame me for everything. Blame avoids responsibility. If I were right, that made her

decision wrong and she couldn't accept that because then everything she was doing was wrong. In order for her to exist emotionally, she had to defend her decision for the rest of her life.

✎ 1983 ✎

Scott Nearing, a political and social radical who with his wife, Helen, had parented the back-to-the-land movement, died at 100 years of age. There were 1300 cases of AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Disease).

The girls called about coming for Thanksgiving but nothing ever came of it. Valerie had moved to western Canada during the summer and was sharing a house with Susan and two of her friends. Even though it was a paradise with snow-capped Rockies and the ocean, she wondered why she wasn't happy. She really wanted to visit and talk, closing with, "Please write, I need a little help!" I was relieved my two daughters were together.

Mitra, a psychic from New York, gave a talk in town one evening and we immediately made appointments for the next day. The hours I spent with him changed my life.

MENDOCINO, MENDOCINO

Steve and I had back-to-back appointments the next day with Mitra, a tall, heavysset man with long, thin, light-brown hair and hazel eyes, that seemed focused on another dimension. Perhaps he could unravel parts of my past and shed some light on my lineage.

Mitra told me to make myself comfortable because this might take a while and he didn't want to be distracted. He settled into a chair in front of me and explained he would be going into a trance but could hear me answer if he asked a question; I should wait until the session was over if I had something to ask, though my questions would probably be answered without my asking. I had brought along a picture of my parents. He initially thought they appeared happy, but then saw something else: my mother looked mean and as he gazed at her image, it confirmed his feeling about her having quite a mean streak.

I was prompted to tell him about a difficult situation that was going on with trying to save some trees near where I lived. I had called the county commissioners and an ordeal developed. He didn't waste any time explaining it from another perspective.

The mind is such that when we get focused on something, we tend to lose the background. We're only focused on the foreground - the object of the focus. In this situation, you were concerned about the trees and what sometimes happens is we lose the awareness of the people involved and the people, however callous they may be, are also living organisms and deserve compassion as much as the trees. So it becomes a situation of how can you show compassion to these people and at the same time get them to be more compassionate about the trees. It becomes a much more complex issue. And one of the things happening here for you is an opportunity to see how you can better show compassion to everything and everyone involved and not just the trees.

Helplessness sets the stage for anxiety, depression, pessimism, guilty thinking and can lead to chronic immune suppression (for example, making one less able to reject cancer cells). Understanding life's bad events gives us valuable information about where we are psychologically on the continuum between helplessness and the control grounded in compassion and self-knowledge. We can attribute problems to ourselves, to a person or force outside ourselves, or to chance. If we look to ourselves as the cause of our troubles, we can either take responsibility for our actions in a way that leads to insight and growth, or we can engage in self-blame. Chronic self-blamers are pessimists. Pessimism reflects underlying helplessness and leads to depression rather than responsible action. If we attribute our problems to others, this blocks responsibility and growth. If we attribute our problems to chance, we side-step the issues of blame and responsibility. While this attribution spares us guilt feelings, it doesn't make us feel any less helpless. In fact it makes us feel even more helpless because there is no way to control, manipulate, bargain with, avoid or pray to chance.

Your daughters all have a low self-esteem, something you have lived with and brought to their pictures, a thing that women give to their young, accompanied by the fact that their father never really participated in their growth.

All of the kids are strong-willed. What's going on here is power, their sense of power. Susan has more male energy in her, and her sense of power will come out more aggressively and bluntly. Valerie and Elizabeth are more in touch with their feminine energy. When they manipulate and their will comes out, it'll be in a more passive-aggressive way so it's not as obvious. But they'll get their way more than Susan. Susan has a tough time with life because she makes it difficult as to the way she approaches it. She's too demanding. She is the most receptive and in a sense the most passive although she's not passive. She knows how to get what she wants more easily than the other girls do. She's learned by observing them.

What's going on between your two older daughters and yourself has to do with issues relating to your self-esteem as a woman and a mother. And they know that. And it gives them subconsciously two issues to deal with. One, it gives them a sense of power over you that if they don't give Mom a sense of acceptance and respect, she's going to feel badly and going to feel like she's failed and then that gives them a sense of power. It's like the mother who automatically starts off with the guilt trip on herself and the child sees this and gets everything it wants by just simply playing on that guilt for the next thirty-five years. And there's a little bit of that going on between Valerie and Susan. Particularly Susan. But the other issue that's going on is the degree to which you don't see yourself as a good mother and a good woman in relationship to your two older children. To that same degree they have difficulty accepting their own femininity and their own role as women in relationship to other men and especially to their own future children if they're going to have any. When you deal with your children, you must deal with your own attitude. You have not failed. You are not a failure. You are a human being and you have to give yourself more unconditional acceptance for being human, for being a woman, for having a lot of unresolved issues, for having made some choices that have led to some difficult situations with your ex-husband. And recognize that that's just the way it was, neither good nor bad. In relation to your daughters, recognize that your worth rests with the fact that you are not what you are in the eyes of others. Keep making that distinction for yourself, particularly with your children. You owe them nothing at this point in time. If anything, they're the ones who owe you something. And in your relationship with the two of them, especially Susan, I would point out to them that whatever inadequacies or whatever feelings they have, the strong negative ones of anger and rejection toward others is really what they're feeling about themselves, and they're just projecting their feelings onto others instead of being honest and taking responsibility for it.

The first chakra is related to the earth element [the grounding chakra], the sense of smell, security and insecurity, and governs the adrenal glands, kidneys and spinal column. This center holds the belief patterns connected to our biological family. When this connection is violated we encounter the shadow side of this chakra - feelings of being isolated and lost. You were disconnected from your roots. You have no nest because there is a lack of security here. No place on earth really feels like home for you. You have always been able to get up and move easily. You love where you live but you're always looking for somewhere else to settle.

A law of nature is that adults take responsibility for their young. When that law is broken, the flow of life is shattered within the individual. Your real mother gave you up and left an archetypal wound. You were given a name and a family took you in, accepted the responsibility of giving you a home.

Because you work with the medium of stone [marble], you have a very strong affinity for the earth. It makes you solid and grounded and gives you a wonderful sense of achievement. There's a sense of 'isness,' the concrete, the strong in you, which is very fine and beautiful but at times creates problems. You have a great deal of vitality and energy here. However, you tend to become like a rock, immovable, or you perceive others as immovable. And sometimes circumstances that you're trying to work through become more difficult than they need to be.

There is a lack of security here in your self-esteem and that affects the second chakra, which has to do with the water element. Any problems in your physical body will have to do with the water element - kidneys, circulation, salivation.

The second chakra has to do with sexual energy and self-esteem. In this aspect of your consciousness there is confusion as to where your self-esteem is based. Your first experience of yourself was what your biological mother experienced. She felt she was a rebel and was rejected for being a rebel; she was going to give up this child. Your next experience was being in the arms of a woman [your biological mother] who would not hold you any longer and that rejection got reinforced. Then you went to a mother [adoptive] whom you observed as a confused neurotic woman who did not know how to function intelligently. She always had to be protected from herself by your adoptive father or real father. You did not choose to be like her. There was no real connection there, yet that was the only model you had for most of your childhood. As to how a woman is, therefore, you never really totally accepted your own womanhood. That's why so much of your artwork is on the female. You are still dealing with the issue of what it is to be a woman.

Being a woman is not being stupid. But in your subconscious you associate intelligence with the male, not the female. And therefore action, activity, aggressiveness, work, doing - all of that is highly esteemed because your father was so much more balanced, clear, functional, loving and caring than your mother. You need still to resolve your relationship to your mother. Female energy is primal and is basically the principle of total receptivity and passive vulnerability. That is why women have greater endurance than men, because when you are totally vulnerable you are invulnerable. You cannot break an open window. Part of the reason that you're so involved in the arts is that you are always exploring your feminine dynamic and energy.

The second chakra governs one's creative attitude in relationships, sex and reproduction, attitudes to sin and guilt. It's our survival center. It warns us of dangers we can't see and gives us that extra strength we don't have normally. Each person in our lives is there for a spiritual reason. Negative relationships force us to learn something we need to learn.

The third chakra has to do with the fire element and the sense of power, control and

communication. It is the seat of emotional living [attachments to children]. This is very much involved in your work. There is here a very strong feeling of helplessness. It triggers you, makes you angry, depressed. People gain a sense of power by making others feel helpless. Some people's day is not complete unless they put down at least one person to give them a sense of power and well-being. You have a very strong sense of helplessness in terms of your birth mother feeling helpless and not knowing whether she should keep this baby or not. Then you're adopted into a family with a mother who was creating a feeling of helplessness for you. She didn't know how to deal with a child and you were helpless to do anything about it. Your way of dealing with it was not to deal with it, to move away from it into the deeper levels of your consciousness. That is why you are interested in meditation, metaphysics, art and the intuitive aspects of life, because it takes you away from the feelings of helplessness and dealing with concrete issues of pots and pans being thrown at you. It's the sense of, well, you can do something with art and writing that gives you a sense of power. But when it moves into human relationships, then you start to move into a sense of helplessness. Since you feel it but don't allow yourself to totally move through it, it stays stuck in you and you will attract people and situations that will create more feelings of helplessness.

The issue to deal with here is to be helpless. The whole point of being able to be a human being is to experience the polarity of power and helplessness. You cannot have one without the other. There are many situations we cannot do anything about except to accept them. Once they are accepted then they are no longer an issue. Either a person changes entirely in the way that they relate to us, because they feel the change in us and they intuitively react to it, or we change the way we see them and deal with them.

The heart, the fourth chakra, has to do with the element of air, how you love and how you receive love. The thymus gland governs the heart, blood and circulatory system, immune and endocrine systems. It is the core of the soul. In this sense of your consciousness you are dealing with the issue of rejection. Part of being a rebel for you is you are concerned about social and humanitarian issues, spiritual principles and issues on a larger scale that involve many people and many forms of life. You are at the same time rejecting others who you feel are rejecting you. When you cease to reject, you will cease feeling rejected. And you are creating your own sense of alienation and rejection from many people and it is a lack of heart, a lack of love. It is a lack of ability to recognize and honor the equality of all life. Although Steve is not an orphan, he has a very similar feeling of rejection that you have that he's not been able to resolve yet. You are both dealing with this lack of self-esteem. It's very subtle because you're both very high achievers, but it is still an issue subconsciously in the first, second and heart chakras. The decision to follow your heart when you met Steve was the most difficult one you have ever had to make.

*"From a truly spiritual perspective, a person may come to realize that remaining in these situations [unhappy marriages] contributes not love to others, but the energy of a sad and empty heart."*¹

The throat center, the fifth chakra, has to do with the Akashic element, which is vibratory frequencies of all matter, sound and psychological boundaries. You and Steve isolate

yourselves from people so that you don't have to deal with all of the distractions and interactions. You focus all of your energy into your artwork because on a deeper level there are issues of your own pain, helplessness and rejection that are not yet integrated and resolved. You simply move away from that, bring all of that energy up and do a quantum leap to another level, the third eye level, and channel all that energy into your work. Then you've created something desirable, beautiful and an inspiration to others. So you do a lot of bypassing in the throat rather than feel and sense what's going on sometimes. You are one who will determine your own destiny and so will Steve. However, your lack of self-esteem prevents you sometimes from recognizing the power that is within and working through your humanity. You are god in expression.

In your relationship with Steve you do not give him as much space as he needs. You have had a very strong conditioning from your mothers that the woman is able to maneuver the male in many ways. It comes from a third eye level and he's not even aware that you're doing it. Neither are you. There is still a very subtle sense of the little girl manipulating her daddy here. There is need for more flexibility on your part.

Your solitary way like the eagle must be so, but only because you have those that you must feed and those that you must care for in this world and you can best do that through solitude very often. So it isn't a question of moving away from the world but moving closer to the world through solitude.

The more balanced we are between the masculine (yang) and feminine (yin) in ourselves, the trimmer our bodies become because our bodies reflect our consciousness. Fat in any area represents un- expressed emotion.

Because you're adopted there is a greater sense of freedom for you to be whatever you want to be - consider it a blessing.

The best way to convert an enemy is to be his friend. And recognize that enemy within yourself. Whatever you esteem to be bad is not. Whatever you esteem to be good is not. It just simply is.

Psychic reading with Mitra, November 3, 1983

After Mitra's session I had a lot to think about. It would take years to absorb. I finally recognized where my sense of helplessness and low self-esteem originated.



During the next two years Valerie and Susan visited a number of times. Since they were living out west, by themselves, closer to us, it was easier to make plans. During this short span of time we found one another again and actually enjoyed being together. We did a lot of talking about what they were doing with their lives and how they felt about their father being so far

away. They seemed to like being on their own away from family.

✎ 1984 ✎

President Reagan slashed \$140 billion out of social programs and escalated the defense budget to \$181 billion. Over one million poor children were deprived of free school lunches. A quarter of the nation's children were living in poverty. The AIDS virus was identified.

At the end of the summer Elizabeth left for Lake Tahoe with a family for whom she babysat. They were going to visit parents who lived on a wilderness lake where no cars were allowed. She would help out with the son until we closed the gallery and then meet us somewhere in California after we found a school for her to attend.



Steve and I left in mid-September, starting at the northern border of California and working our way south, combing the coast for alternative high schools. When we reached a school in Mendocino, the secretary picked up on my disappointment after I examined their class schedule, which was the same as the other places we had stopped; she sent us to the Community School to meet the head teacher. He was an intense, good-looking man of thirty-six and we liked him immediately. Although they were full, he agreed to let Elizabeth start and when her name came up on the waiting list she would formally be admitted. He explained that the students had to draw up contracts with their teachers as to what they planned to accomplish during the year and as long as they fulfilled their obligations they could do as they wished. Sounded good to me. Three days later we watched as a very sun-bleached, blonde-haired Elizabeth rolled into the Santa Rosa bus depot. Four days later we moved into a cottage in Elk, a tiny town eighteen miles south of Mendocino at the end of the school bus route.

Mendocino, a picturesque, historical town, perched on a promontory on the westernmost point of the state, was right out of a John Steinbeck novel - weathered, brown, shingled sea cottages, hundred-year-old restored storybook houses with white picket fences, gabled shake roofs and arched windows; paint-peeled water towers; narrow winding paths along the windblown, sun-scorched headlands, brushed and battered by storms over the Pacific; no traffic lights; the best video store; and "Corners of the Mouth," a church converted to a health food store run by dedicated, politically-conscious, outspoken women. It was an oasis in the second largest marijuana-growing community in the country, an alternative town in the redneck culture of California.

While Elizabeth went through eleventh grade we lived in a cottage built by Portuguese fishermen eighty years ago, perched on a cliff with a private cove below. The cove was reached by ropes along a steep, narrow trail that wound its way across overhanging ledges to the ocean. We picked shells, rocks and abalone at low tide and watched seals sleeping on rocks. For the next few months Elizabeth experienced a new way of learning, and we appreciated the availability of organic food and the luxuriance of being by the ocean. The girls

and I stayed in touch regularly.

✎ 1985 ✎

Mikhail Gorbachev became the premier of the Soviet Union. Rock Hudson died of AIDS, his death substantially raising the awareness of the virus.

I had never considered myself to be an angry person and deluded myself into thinking my childhood had been a happy one. I lived in a dream but my feelings were starting to change, partly as a result of thinking about my reading with Mi-tra. Why did my mother and I fight constantly? Why couldn't we talk about my adoption?

It took a few months to find the courage to write to the Mouvement Retrouvailles in Montreal, which was a movement in Quebec for the recognition of the right to information of one's roots. They answered, thinking I was an organization. They couldn't help me and I set aside the idea of searching. But the seed had been planted, and it would take time before I took the plunge. I was forty-five.

Healing begins when adoptees take control of their own lives by making the decision to search. The fetus has stored cellular knowledge of its mother which can be retrieved. Adoptees decide to search when they have access to the feelings they have stashed away. The decision is not made in one impulsive moment, but arrived at over time as the self gradually evolves from one level of consciousness to another. I must have felt a deep trust in Steve to open my feelings to him and, living in Mendocino, where everybody was dealing with something and talking about it, was conducive to soul-searching.

We went to see Joy, a psychic in Mendocino. Perhaps she could provide a link, a place to start, a piece of information with which I could work to find my roots.

You have had quite a few incarnations and the balance of male to female has been pretty good. The last few lifetimes have been more male, the purpose being that you needed to develop the ability to maintain your own integrity of energy - to not give yourself away to others. It's very easy for mothers and women to give to others to the exclusion of themselves. That has been a lesson you have been trying to integrate on a soul level - to learn how to give to yourself in the process of giving to others so that you don't drain yourself, don't neglect your needs.

What triggered this was a lifetime in England, or maybe Germany, in the 1700's. You were a young girl, about eleven, working in a kitch-en owned by rich people. There was a lot of tension, fear of doing the wrong thing, and you were always on edge. You had come from a poor family, lots of kids, so to be able to work in this household was a boon. Nobody was mean to you but there was that desire to do well and you did, going from sculler maid to cook. You gave your all to the family. When you were in your twenties, the blacksmith wanted to marry you but you didn't have time for that. You were afraid to change what you did because you had to struggle for it and didn't want to lose it. What happened was a rigidity of focus.

You married a sailor who went off to sea, which suited you because you didn't have to leave your job. You had a male child, brought him into the kitchen and devoted yourself to him. Your dream was that he would become a minister, priest or teacher. But he was very much his father's son and one day he left and became a sailor. In order to get a good job on a boat, one needed money, so he took the money you had put away for his schooling. You felt a real sense of betrayal, and so a bitterness set in which affected the end of that lifetime. It also estranged you from your son. By being rigid you set yourself up for failure. When he'd visit you remained aloof even though you loved him. So he would end up not visiting. The purpose of that lifetime was to make you realize that you had to start learning how to be creative for yourself, not only for others. This was two lifetimes ago.

There was a short one in between now and that one. You were a young boy of sixteen. You went off to be a sailor. The ship hit a storm and everybody died. It was you trying to understand what your son had done. It started your focus for this lifetime as being one of developing your creativity for yourself.

As far as paths of creativity, as I look at the chakra system, one that stands out most is the fifth or throat chakra, of communication. You can pull in a higher frequency, a healing frequency, and manifest it through the voice, to talk to people and communicate and be very healing, and put it out through the hands, which can manifest as being an artist or writer. Sculptor. Your channels are so clear because you use them.

Greece: In that lifetime you were a male, a slave and you sculpted. There was a frustration because you couldn't do what moved you and had to listen to a master. You were owned by a man who was political and this was a way for him to gain prestige. After five or six years, when you finished the temple, you were so run down that you died from pneumonia or TB. You were in your thirties.

In all your lifetimes you were very creative but hadn't been able to do what you wanted. You had to do it for others. This lifetime is learning how to go past that and break through to another level. You may feel blocked if you have an idea to get out and that's because your mind is moving up to that other level, having a new ability to put through to physical terms. On a being level you've got it but on a physical level you haven't learned to manifest it yet. It's an important impulse that will break through and you have to allow it to do so. You have the ability to be very disciplined when you choose, which is what helps you get things done. But sometimes the discipline gets in the way of allowing the impulsiveness to go through with the creative bursts. Be disciplined when appropriate, be impulsive when that gets you to where you want to go. Since your children are grown you can focus more into you. Before there was all that dispersion going into the children. The next three to five years will be a time for you to develop that.

Psychic Reading, Joy, April, 1985



At the beginning of May after we left for Jackson Hole to open the gallery, Elizabeth moved into a scamp (a tiny trailer) behind one of her teacher's houses so she could finish her last two months of school.

Her grades were excellent and her teachers wrote glowing reports: very attentive, so responsible, caring and sincere; self-motivated; and she demonstrated the ability to run her own life. How wonderful the learning process can be instead of just rules and class averages. That's what it takes for some kids to blossom - freedom.

My middle daughter surprised us by arriving earlier than planned. It took a while for Steve and me to adjust as by then we cherished our time alone. She started work at a job I had found for her. It was mid-June when Elizabeth arrived from Mendocino.

Then an unfortunate situation unfolded. When I had applied for Elizabeth's passport for her European trip (one she never went on with her school class), the Canadian government discovered that I had been receiving Quebec Family Allowance checks all those years while not residing in the province. When I told them I had never received any, they sent some checks signed with my signature for me to see. I had to prove my handwriting wasn't on those documents. The government sent me hundreds of checks each attached to a number of forms for me to sign in the presence of a notary which took hours. When they asked where my ex was, I told them I didn't know. I figured if they wanted to find him badly enough, they would. Susan found out about all this from her father, and belligerently accused me of getting the Feds after her father. Nothing I explained made any difference. I knew then that my daughter and I didn't have a chance to heal our relationship and if we ever did, it wouldn't be for a long time. Once again I was helpless.

Susan has become a bit of a snob. She's putting herself down inside on some level and then reacting to that. Her attitude is not a good one right now. She's very closed, very angry and very judgmental. She has felt a lot of rejection and she's translating everything into terms of rejection and acceptance. She's rejecting rejection, which is like fearing fear, and it develops into paranoia. When you reject rejection it develops into depression and anger and rejection of other people. She's going to become more obnoxious until she's willing to deal with the rejection and recognize that it isn't all it's cracked up to be.

Psychic Reading by Mitra, 1983

I had to do something and after much investigation found a therapist who agreed to see Susan. She went alone for the first few times and then I was asked to join them. I answered questions and cried a lot but Susan didn't hear a word. Even the therapist became frustrated. If Susan did hear me, that would make her wrong in everything she had been doing, which would have been too dangerous for her. Who can choose between a mother and a father? She had gone to court and had been forced to speak against her mother, leaving a lifelong scar. The walls were Up.

Always looking for more privacy, we were lucky to find some land for sale in Grand Teton National Park with a spectacular view of the Tetons. We sold our property, land only, and moved our cabin lock, stock and barrel to our new location, becoming one of the few inholders in a National Park.

Elizabeth was in Mendocino for her last year of high school. She had rented a room in town with a single mother and her daughter, and when she called to tell us that the woman who owned the house was leaving for two months, we jumped at the chance to visit her and Mendocino again.

LETTERS FROM NEPAL

✎ 1986 ✎

The \$1.2 billion space shuttle Challenger exploded shortly after launch because of a malfunctioning \$900 synthetic O-ring and killed all seven astronauts on board. A Soviet Union nuclear reactor at Chernobyl exploded unleashing a radioactive cloud that spread for thousands of miles. The U.S. government recorded 21,517 cases of AIDS with 11,713 deaths. The Iran-Contra scandal was exposed. Krishnamurti died.

The house was in town making everything accessible. We were so used to living at least an hour away from the middle of things, this was a nice change. What luxury to walk to the health food store rather than stocking up for three weeks, return a latest release video the next day and be near the few friends we had made. My father called from Montreal and immediately put Susan on the phone because I had complained she wasn't keeping in touch. The wounds temporarily shrouded with distance and time opened, and I entered another world at the sound of her voice.

After two months of easy California living, we returned to Wyoming. Elizabeth's report card said, among other things, she was a great asset to the school and right on track for graduation in June. A letter from her told us she had applied to the Study Club for a scholarship and just had an interview with the women behind the endowment. She was taking the PSAT exam and plowing through verification papers and scholarship applications. A form was enclosed for me to sign for World College West (WCW), a small private institution just north of San Francisco I had discovered a few years earlier while researching alternative schools. (When I called for information, what I heard interested me. The staff lived off campus while the kids ran the college. Their second year was spent in Nepal, Mexico or China on a study program.)

She ended her letter with an issue she had about being accepted and a lot of stuff about Susan and Valerie came up. After walking by the ocean she felt better. Acceptance has been a major issue in my life, with the feeling of non-acceptance going back to the time my birth mother gave me up for adoption. This archetypal wound had been passed on to Elizabeth and my adoptive traits had become hers. Daughters develop like their mothers and unless we are mindful of our methods, there is no growth or change and the generations unfold unaltered.

Valerie wrote that she had decided to go and work for her father. My heart sank. I felt cold and lost and defeated. After all that time by herself, a move back east was a regressive act. When she was with her father, our relationship suffered. And we had come so far. Leaving your boyfriend to live with your father? What's wrong with the boyfriend?

In mid-June Elizabeth's teacher unexpectedly called almost too excited to speak. She couldn't wait to tell us that Elizabeth had won the \$1000 scholarship from the Study Club, and we had to promise not to call her with the news. This had never happened to the Community

School, since it was always a person from the regular high school who got the prize. She had put them on the map.



While the summer season was in full swing, thoughts of Valerie suddenly filled my mind. I cried and talked about her and in a few days received a letter. She was torn about her decision. She said she couldn't make up her mind, though I knew she already had, but she needed to pacify me in order to feel free to go and live with her father. To this day, I wonder if she realizes what she does in order to keep her parents happy. It's an awful dilemma children find themselves in after a divorce. How can they ever learn to be honest about their feelings when they are constantly trying to please both people!

In the beginning of September, I picked Valerie up at the airport, dropped Elizabeth off at her summer job's staff party, and Valerie and I went out for dinner alone, something we had never done. A Mexican beer for her, some saki for me, and I listened while she told me about her life. She was living with her boyfriend, going to art school, and waitressing evenings. She was fun to be with and we drove home still laughing and talking.

The next day my two daughters and I left for a five-day hike on the Teton Crest Trail. Elizabeth fell asleep, exhausted from her late night out, and Valerie and I talked into the night about her problems with her father and everyday dealings that take up a lifetime, while those deep, forbidden emotions remained untouched. We had been apart for two years Valerie and Elizabeth played some gin rummy while I rested and remembered how close they used to be ... I stared at my oldest daughter asleep and wondered what really filled her mind. Lost memories that I had buried for so long surfaced. We were mother and daughter, not close friends. There was a painful chasm between us that one day would have to be bridged, if we could find the time. Then perhaps we could be friends.

Valerie left a few days later and I knew that our close feelings would not Continue.



Elizabeth's financial aid was settled and she started at World College West, a cluster of buildings high on a hill amongst trees and open, rolling meadows outside Petaluma in northern California.

At the end of the month Steve and I left for Canada to look for land. After crossing the border all news was about the Meech Lake Accord. The Constitutional Act of 1982 had not sat well with French Quebec, which wanted recognition as a distinct society. Prime Minister Brian Mulroney invited the premiers to a First Minister's Conference at Meech Lake to approve a package that met Quebec's key demands and incorporated the concerns of the other provinces. We found no land that appealed to us and after six days returned.

Elizabeth came to Wyoming for Christmas. A week later my menopause started and I thought

my life was over. During the night I was gripped by an indistinct feeling which forced me out of bed to the tiny loft window for a breath of fresh, cold air. The sweats that had started months ago increased and I had to change nightshirts several times. My heart pounded, the darkness was unbearable, and claustrophobic feelings caused me to move our bed downstairs where there was more room to move around. I had a strong desire to bundle up and go for a long walk but not in the middle of the night at twenty below zero.

During the day I was irritable and emotional, crying at almost everything, uncertain about my decisions. Elizabeth and I went for a walk and talked about my feelings. I was surprised when she asked if I was afraid of getting old. I had never really thought about it. I was only forty-six. But menopause represents old age! Only in America is forty-six considered old. Nobody talked about it. Isn't it strange the things we aren't told about our bodies? I asked friends my own age and got nothing constructive. I asked my mother who told me I would just have to learn to live with it. I would? What about Steve?

I read everything I could and found that emotional release, work and exercise were high on the list. I started yoga again, gave up spicy foods and took supplements - vitamins, minerals, don quai, wild yam, black cohosh, valerian and homeopathic menopause pills. For my heart pounding I learned to press the acupuncture point at the junction of my wrist and hand on the little finger side, my heart slowed. I kept the light on all night and got rid of those claustrophobic feelings. I exercised for hours but still couldn't sleep well.

The intensity of symptoms continued for six weeks until my naturopath suggested a combination of herbs that might help. Passion flower and valerian did the trick and my system finally geared down from first to third.

❖ 1987 ❖

Valerie didn't last long in the east. She had received the photographs from our trip in the Tetons and wanted to do it again.



In August, Elizabeth and I headed into the Wind River Mountains, the most inaccessible wilderness in Wyoming, for six days. Valerie never made it. I didn't know at the time that the Harmonic Convergence was happening on August 17, our first night out. According to a prophecy handed down among the Hopi Indians, 144,000 Sun Dance enlightened teachers would "awaken" in their dream/mind bodies and a rainbow light would be created, "awakening the rest of humanity." The Mayans marked this date as the climactic moment in a 5,000-year-long process of global civilization, an evolutionary shift away from the collective vision of competition and conflict towards collaboration. And the Aztecs believed that a new period of Heavens would dawn for the world, the start of a new era. It was about 2:00 a.m. when I felt the call of nature and stepping out of the tent into the cold night air I noticed a myriad of white spots on the ground, my feet and the rocks around me. I looked up at the sky to see a brilliant lacy web of radiance. The entire curvature of the sky shimmered and I knew that something

different was definitely happening in the heavens.

Elizabeth returned to college in September and wrote that she had told Ashok (the man from Nepal who arranged for the family with whom she would be staying) that she wanted to be as far away as they would let her be from western influences and was interested in rug weaving.

At the end of the month we drove to California to see Elizabeth before she left for her six-month study program in Nepal. We spent a few days with her, slept in our van on a hill behind the dorms, ate at the cafeteria, and then left her to her last-minute preparations and drove the coast highway to Mendocino to visit friends. It was during the night when a terrible pain set in. I blamed it on the white-flour pasta I had eaten, having changed to whole-wheat years ago, but the pain got worse as the day wore on. I rubbed witch hazel on my abdomen and used a hot water bottle but the pain persisted. I had to get past the fact that Elizabeth was going to live on the other side of the world for a long time. I was frightened. The pain persisted for the next three days and suddenly, at the exact moment her plane landed in Nepal, it stopped.

"When energy flows from your system in fear or distrust, you experience a physical feeling of pain or discomfort in the part of your body that is associated with the particular energy center that is losing power. When you feel that you do not have enough power to insure your well-being or your safety - you experience discomfort or pain in the area of your stomach, your solar plexus. What we call anxiety is the experience of power leaving through the energy center that is located in this area of the body." ¹

A letter from Susan told me she had found an apartment, had a lot of my artwork on her walls, was interested in family law and the rights of minors. She sounded happier. As long as she checked in, I was okay that we didn't see each other more often. She responded to my next letter, in which she felt that I accused her of pretending to be my friend and being too wrapped up with her father, saying she hardly saw him and their relationship was not my concern. She hoped that one day I might see her in her own light, not one shadowed with past memories. Would I ever be able to rid myself of the jealousy I felt about the relationship my two older girls had with their father? I must learn to release my resentment in order not to injure my love for my daughters.

In a letter Valerie enclosed a photograph of her boyfriend and herself. I stared at the image, astounded at how much her boyfriend looked like her father. Then I did something I would always regret - I returned the photo. Harbored resentment from her decision to leave me and remain with her father had found its outlet with the simple purchase of a postage stamp.

It was just too disturbing to think about her future mirroring so closely my past. Our parents' problems become ours and then our children's. Until we have a breakthrough, an epiphany, we follow blindly in their footsteps. Why did I not just throw the photo away? The one thing I couldn't handle was being rejected by my daughters. Being blamed for everything gnawed at my insides and I regressed to being a child and did childish things. That was one of them.

At the end of the year the Third Summit Meeting took place between Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev and U.S. President Ronald Reagan resulting in the signing of the INF (Intermediate Nuclear Force) Treaty which would bring about the elimination of intermediate range and shorter range missiles ... a turn away from the arms race towards a better relationship between these two superpowers.

I believe this was precipitated by the Harmonic Convergence that had occurred when I was in the Wind River Mountains.

After two years my adoption issue surfaced again. I wrote to the courthouse on Notre Dame Street in Montreal for the time of my birth in order to have an astrological chart done. They answered a month later regretfully informing me that in their files there was no time of birth. Once again I let it go.

✎ 1988 ✎

Global warming due to the greenhouse effect became a major concern. "Greenhouse effect? Oil shortages? Oops, wrong planet; in the wonderful world of Reagan land these dire problems have been completely solved by scrapping minimum fuel economy standards imposed on auto manufacturers in the 1970's. A consumer group, the Center for Auto Safety, says that instead the standards should be more than doubled, making a huge dent in our dependence on foreign oil, reducing greatly our chances of becoming involved in a war in the Middle East and taking a big step toward undoing the massive damage auto emissions have been doing to our environment throughout the twentieth century."

With Elizabeth in Nepal, to keep her close I wrote about our wilderness walks, my feelings about her being so far away and my world views. Her letters were wonderful, so full of her adventures and impressions that I decided to publish them along with my writings and called the book *Within the Earth A Mountain*. The manuscript was ready for her to read on her return from Nepal.

We picked her up in Petaluma. A flash of golden hair in the window - Elizabeth was safe. Seconds later I hugged a slender body, not the same one that left six months ago. She looked Nepali in her punjabi dress, nose ring and bare feet. God, I'm glad she's home.



Nez Perce Mountain had just unveiled herself and Disappointment Peak was clear as I sat by the window thinking about injustice. It was during a dinner at a friend's that I had my first encounter with raw anti-Semitism. It doesn't really matter what was said; it was the feeling I got in my gut. All of us were embarrassed by the remark. Why didn't I say something? Why didn't we leave immediately? We had known these people for a long time and never knew they felt that way. There was a sudden realization, an attempt at softening the remark, but the air hung

heavy until the door closed behind us. It took two days for Steve and me to bring it up and talk about it. Being confronted by blind ignorance and bigotry is devastating.

The hummingbirds raced around the corner of the porch, sounding like distant buzz saws. The newly-pruned aspens looked greener in the rain and the fences and log piles provided privacy. The Grand Teton was coming into view. Why would anyone think that being born into one race is better than another?



In the middle of July Elizabeth and I picked up Valerie at the airport and left for the Wind Rivers the next morning. It took four and a half hours to get to the Big Sandy Campground, 35 miles of our trip on a gravel/dirt, rutted road that rambled through a grand, unobstructed landscape where pronghorn antelope raced across faded green sagebrush plains. The parking area was crowded which shouldn't have surprised us since this entrance was the most popular in the southern part of the range. It was also the shortest route to the Cirque of the Towers, a renowned roost for rock climbers. The first five miles followed the river to Big Sandy Lake. After lunch we climbed the steep switchbacks and traversed the slopes of Mitchell Peak for two miles to Jackass Pass. It was said that if a trail were designed to demoralize, it would be difficult to improve on this one. High on an arid, rocky ridge, above 11,000' where the air was thin, Valerie got a throbbing headache and we shed our packs to relax. She hadn't acclimatized having come from sea level the day before. Our first glimpse of Lonesome Lake, surrounded by the serrated crest of the Cirque, was a happy moment and we descended to a grassy valley, bush-whacking across a boulder field to find a campsite near a trickling brook. As we shared an orange, two bold marmots waddled over to greet us, insisting on staying when we tried to shoo them away. We climbed another boulder field to Hidden Lake, a tarn amidst profuse wildflowers and mossy grass, and Elizabeth swam in the frigid water while Valerie and I watched, happy to be on our hindquarters. Back at our site we found that our whole-wheat rolls had been munched on. We set up camp and had dinner while the sun sank behind the Cirque leaving a rosy nimbus in a metallic blue-grey sky.

On our second day, after some homemade granola while we watched a bright sun climb into brilliant blue above Mitchell Peak, we packed and descended to the lake ringed with marsh marigolds, Lewis monkey flowers, glacier lilies and alpine laurel. Two miles south along the North Popo Agie River, the obscure, strenuous Lizard Head Trail left the meadows and climbed 2000 feet to the bare upper slopes of Windy Mountain. Above treeline on a windswept glacial plateau from where we could see threatening thunderheads to the west, a lunch of smoked oysters, rolls, cheese and carrot sticks gave us time to rest among a peaceful panorama of peaks. The cairns led us to the Bear's Ears Trail, which descended a narrow alpine valley to Valentine Lake, over five miles. As we were putting up our tent, one of the tent poles broke. We tried desperately to join the ends with a twig running through the center but the tension was too great so we slept in a crooked tent against a beautiful backdrop. Swimming in the icy water left us exhilarated and cleansed. As we attempted to change the compressed gas cylinder to our camp stove, the can emptied into the air and all over us. There was only a little gas left when we finally captured it and we were lucky to have brought a few

extras. Ramen, macaroni and cheese and tea warmed our insides while we watched fish jump for flies. It was quiet and peaceful, a warm, mellow evening, and the day's problems faded as the wind riffled the water and the sky turned navy blue.

The next day, a hazy orange sun hung in the sky as we ate a late breakfast by the lake. Our once gracefully curved tent, now lopsided and awkward, had survived the night. The three of us, so alike in many ways, could exist together best in the backcountry. It was as if we had never been apart. At 11:00 a.m. we packed and started down the long switchbacks toward the South Fork of the Little Wind River, a rocky waterway which sliced a perfect valley of wall-to-wall wildflowers, forested hillsides, and a lone fisherman. We climbed steadily through limber pine to crescent-shaped Grave Lake, where a campsite materialized in a thick grove as it started to drizzle and thunder rolled around the peaks.

The storm didn't last long and we stretched out on a large flat rock by the lake, played in the shallow water and explored the shoreline. A full moon over Mt. Chauvenet glowed white in a hazy sky. This desolate area had a strange stark beauty. Elizabeth fell asleep early while Valerie and I talked about feelings too difficult to discuss over the phone in an attempt to soften the strain of our relationship. She talked about her father, had thought she would have been happy working for him, but there were a lot of issues with his wife, who was jealous of her and couldn't handle her presence. She found herself roaming the streets, was followed one night but managed to get away. Her father and stepmother fought incessantly and during one of their fights, she ended up on top of them on the bed trying to separate them. I listened and could barely accept what she was telling me. These awful scenes were part of my daughter's life. They made me feel helpless and guilty that I allowed my first-born to be involved in such a horrible situation.

Startled by the sound of footsteps outside our tent, our conversation came to a sudden halt. We listened, frozen in space, hearts pounding. It was silly to think that a thin piece of nylon between us and whatever was outside provided safety. We tried desperately to be quiet as we searched for the firecrackers in Elizabeth's pack and as I held a match ready to strike, Valerie held the tiny firecracker. A twig cracked. We waited but must have finally dozed because it was about 3:00 a.m. when we heard it again. My nylon bag rustled as I changed position and two large ears went up in the screened triangular doorway of the tent. A deer. What a relief!

The next morning was slightly overcast, good for crossing 11,890' Hailey Pass. After breakfast we started out, shedding a layer of clothing as we climbed around the sheer wall of 12,504' Mt. Hooker, the steepest of its height in the Winds. A couple who had just come down from the pass let us know we were going up the hard way. We started the ascent, in loose gravel and sand, hardly stable enough for a foothold, and as it got more vertical, the switchbacks shortened, becoming barely visible. Clutching at loose, rocky soil and crawling on all fours, we reached the top and a grand view of undulating peaks as far as the eye could see. After a gradual descent to Twin Lakes and a stop for lunch we climbed to Pyramid Lake where the trail ended. It didn't take long to find a campsite in the meadow that rimmed the lake, with a view of Ambush, Raid and Mount Geikie Peaks to the west, Bonneville to the north. Setting up quickly to avoid a passing storm, its tailwind shaking the tent, we spent the late afternoon in a

warm, luxurious tent, lazily braiding each other's hair, plucking eyebrows, stray whiskers, filing fingernails and grooming each other like chimpanzees. It was so normal being with Valerie but I was in total denial of what our lives were really about. I desperately wanted everything to be okay. It wasn't. I slept well that night. A full moon lit the sky and once again we were alone in a quiet corner of the cosmos.

On our fifth day out, we were up as the sun peered over Pyramid Peak and eating breakfast as it warmed the tent. While the girls climbed 11,172' Midsummer Dome, I sketched the peaks of the East Fork Valley, anxiously watching them move around on top, relieved when they reached bottom. We hiked to the lakes below, bush wacked over a heavily treed hillside and up a bouldered creek to Mae's Lake. Heading out, reluctantly leaving this realm of peaks, divides, glaciers, basins and high plateaus, I felt compelled to keep looking back, for that indelible impression to be etched on my mind until the alpine reaches became available again. Instead of spending our last night at a lower altitude, we decided to hike the two and a half miles to Shadow Lake, on this side of the Cirque, and stay high. There wasn't much choice for a site and our tent ended up too close to the lake. Some pasta dumped in the shallow water by an indifferent camper upset us. The sinking sun left a vermillion, purple, orange sky and its glow washed the rocks with a warm red while the valley dropped into dusk and finally darkness. Tomorrow was our last day.

It was an easy nine-mile walk out. The long dusty drive towards civilization had us worried about running out of gas but we made it, filled up in Boulder, bought a six-pack of cold Coronas in Pinedale, and Elizabeth drove home. A huge fresh green salad from the garden, pasta with pesto sauce, hot showers and some new tales to tell. It had been a good hike - 6 days, 40 miles - with no mishaps but a bent tent.

Valerie left the next day. That was to be our last trip together and we seemed to grow farther apart the closer we tried to get. She called when she got home to tell me that she was having a tough time being back. I knew something was bothering her. After much prodding she confided that her boyfriend had admitted to having cheated while she was away. Not a nice welcome home and I was distressed at her dilemma. A daughter's hell is a mother's heartache.

FIRE IN THE MOUNTAINS

"Fire is the most perfect and unadulterated reflection, in Heaven as on Earth, of the One Flame. It is life and death, the origin and the end of every material thing. It is divine substance." ¹

The summer of 1988 started with reports of a drought scorching America's Midwest. In Jackson the heat of June had reached an all time high of 96 degrees. These record-breaking temperatures began to dry out forests that had already been subjected to two mild winters and on the hill behind our cabin some wells were dry. Fires began as expected but in July the magnitude of the fire season suddenly became apparent. The national media turned from the plight of Midwestern farmers and converged on the Yellowstone ecosystem to report about the most volatile and political fire story in the country's history.

From 1880 to 1970 National Park policy had been to put out all fires as soon as possible. However, natural fires do a number of important jobs: they clean out areas of deadfall that burn easily and they burn firebreak corridors through expanses of otherwise solid forest, thus reducing the risk of catastrophic fire spread. The forests, in other words, take care of themselves. But ten years of mountain pine-beetle infestation had killed many trees, thus adding fuel. Because of the dry climate and long winters, not much deadwood had decayed. Ninety years' worth of kindling was still on the ground in 1988. The policy placed in effect in 1972 gave park officials discretion in handling natural fires. These were monitored daily but allowed to burn if they posed little threat to life or property.

Ten lightning-caused fires at the end of June and the beginning of July were allowed to progress naturally despite severe drought conditions. Four more fires raced upon the Park from adjacent national forests, and we watched the towering columns of smoke rise above the valley to the north as the oldest national park in America was burning on its seventy-fifth anniversary. It was still very much in the distance and not a threat to Jackson Hole.

On July 25 fierce winds drove some of the blazes into Yellowstone's Grant Village and one building was lost at West Thumb; others threatened property in the Gallatin National Forest and forced the evacuation of the Montana towns of Silver Gate and Cooke City; another became a wildfire in four days and the sight of a dramatic back burn which let off 3.5 billion BTUs, the equivalent of a nuclear bomb. On July 22 the North Fork fire, set accidentally by a woodcutter's spark in the Targhee National Forest, quickly spread into Yellowstone and, when the wind picked up, exploded onto five fronts nearly engulfing Old Faithful and rolling within a half mile of Park Headquarters at Mammoth. A finger of it split off threatening Canyon, Tower and Roosevelt Junctions. Helicopters, bulldozers and ground troops could only stand aside as the North Fork fire took its toll.

West Yellowstone residents claimed that full suppression tactics were not employed in the early stages of that fire. Certain crews were prohibited from using chainsaws and a water-truck

driver was ticketed for driving off the road. Bull- dozers were banned when they didn't pass park inspection. In mid-August a fire started in the Custer National Forest when a horseshoe nicked a rock sending a spark into dry grass. Another ignited near Pinedale, ninety miles south of Jackson. Tinder-dry forest conditions coupled with gale-force winds produced the notorious "Black Saturday," when 56,000 acres in Yellowstone were consumed. The fire- fighting forces doubled but still could not stop the growing infernos. Another fire started from the same windstorm and spread to Shadow Mountain, four miles north of our cabin. We watched as helicopters flew at five-minute intervals carrying huge water buckets swinging from their underbellies.

Our friend Bonnie called from Jackson offering storage space if we wanted to move some of our things. It was hard to believe it might come to that. We talked about transferring our artwork but decided to wait a day. There was fire every- where, ash on everything and we couldn't stay outdoors. The helicopters continued until dark when the full moon rose, turned blood red, then disappeared as the smoke moved in again. When a dull orange sun shone at 9:00 the next morning, the smoke was so thick that some valley residents reported not being able to see their neighbors' houses fifty feet away.



The fire close to us was contained and so on August 22, Elizabeth and I drove south towards Pinedale and the Elkhart Park entrance to the Winds. Because we had seen a plume of smoke on the way to the trailhead, we stopped at the ranger station. There was a fire at Fayette Lake, just a little blaze and nothing to worry about. We also found out that Knapsack Col, a steep gap on the divide between Peak Lake Valley and Titcomb Basin, was devoid of snow, this being such a dry year, so we could cross the mountains, making a loop rather than retracing our steps. The parking lot was full as usual but only a few people on the trail. After a nine-mile march up to Seneca Lake, we descended two miles to Lost Lake, lost in the woods, ringed by high rocky ridges. A site by a rushing creek away from the few pitched tents provided some privacy and we cooled our burning feet in the lake. I was tired. After dinner and a walk in the woods to see our surroundings and stretch our legs, we lay back in the tent, studying tomorrow's route while a full moon lit this small, secluded valley leaving us in semi-darkness.

At 2:00 a.m. I awoke with a burning sensation in the middle of my stomach. I remember experiencing this when Elizabeth left for Nepal. Was I scared about climbing that high col? Anxious about the prospect of disappointing her? Heights bothered me. I changed sides, tried lying on my back to relieve the pressure and finally fell asleep.

In the morning I discussed my predicament with my daughter. She didn't care what we did or how we got there, she was just happy to be in the wilderness again. I felt better. The pressure was off and the pain almost gone. But the smoke we had seen yesterday had spread across the mountains to fill the draw at the south end of the lake. A wrangler on horseback crossed the stream to find out what we knew about the fire, wondering if he should take his group out the way we had come in. I was just as concerned heading into the mountains for three more

days. After he found out where we were going he said we'd be able to see the fire from the high country and would know what to do. He drew a map in the dirt showing us a more northerly exit in case the fire should continue to spread.

We packed up and climbed to Fremont Crossing, uneasy about going on. Two hikers passed wondering if their car back at Elkhart Park might have melted. As we crossed Shannon Pass we saw the smoke whorl in the southern distance. The trail into Peak Lake Valley, a rocky quadrangle of lakes and huge boulders, was steep and stony, and the creek carrying the melt waters of Stroud Glacier above became the headwaters of the famous Green River. We hiked around this opaque turquoise tarn, set up camp and cooked dinner. I tested myself using kinesiology, taught to us by our naturopath, and found that I was full of acid rain which could have been the cause of my discomfort the previous night. A few minutes after taking some homeopathic pills I felt better. After washing the dust off in the lake, we walked up the canyon towards the col to see what we could see. It looked steep as we arched our necks trying to pick a path. I was feeling positive and Elizabeth reassured me that we could retrace our steps if I felt threatened. We passed one tent on the way back with two guys smoking a joint behind a boulder. The smell taunted me and I lit up back at our site. The sun went down behind the rocky outcrops and the valley deepened in color. I slept well.

The next day we were up before the sun and walking soon after; we reached the "trail's end" sign denoting that we were on our own, a bit unnerving. The col came into view, so high ahead of us, but it disappeared as we walked along a creek which went underground although its gurgle could still be heard. There was only a faint trail as we approached the top and as I scrambled up the last few feet, Elizabeth turned and reached for me. I didn't need help, exhilarated at being where I was, 12,240' in the air. Knapsack Col - the saddle between Twins and Winnifred Peaks with Peak Lake valley on the west, Titcomb Basin on the east and the upper end of the Twins Glacier at our feet. The basin below, formed by one of the range's highest and steepest escarpments, the west faces of Mt. Helen, Mt. Sacajewea and Fremont Peak, all over 13,000', lying in the heart of the northern Winds with three narrow lakes that filled its bottom, dropped from Dinwoody Pass, first steeply and then gradually, to 10,346' Island Lake where we were headed. Creeping along the glacier's edge, we found a spot that looked safe, and holding hands, I slid into my daughter's footsteps while the melting snow rushed far beneath us. A relentless sun had softened the snowpack and I knew we were on unstable ground. Suddenly Elizabeth, who was ahead, disappeared between two huge boulders. A paralyzing chill went through me until I heard her shout that she was okay.

It was a long way down and, struggling to keep on top of the snow, we glissaded to the valley floor, finally reaching muddy ground. We pulled off our boots and socks to wade in the cold, clear water of the upper lake and cooled by a soft breeze, enjoyed a leisurely lunch. With our boots tied to our packs, we walked in our flip-flops along the lakeshore to the entrance of the basin and reluctantly passed through the rocky portal, leaving Shangri-la behind. Three miles to Island Lake and we pitched our tent in the same spot as the last time. The water was cool on our burnt, dusty skin and after washing our shirts and socks, we cooked a large dinner in our tent, then walked to the small sandy beach at the far end of the lake to watch the sun drop off the end of our world.

I awoke abruptly at 5:00 a.m. and could barely make out the faint outline of Elizabeth next to me in the tent. Peering outside, I tried desperately to distinguish something. Alarmed at the lack of visibility and the smell of smoke, I woke her. "We've got to get out," I said as she sleepily tried to focus on me. A large nebulous orange globe was rising over Mitchell Peak and the air, filled with smoke, created a bizarre, unearthly landscape. We packed in a flash and, barely able to breathe, wet our bandannas, stretched them across our faces and started the fifteen-mile hike out.

We left the worst of the haze at Seneca Lake but suddenly Elizabeth couldn't continue. She slid her backpack to the ground, collapsing on a rock. I checked her out with our homeopathics and found she was full of acid rain. Minutes after taking the pills, she was ready to go on. The van was as we had left it, the parking lot considerably less crowded, and a cold beer quenched my parched throat while she drove back to Jackson Hole, the Yellowstone fires and Steve.



On September 6 the Old Faithful complex was evacuated for the first time since the park's founding in 1872. Three helicopters ferried water toward the mushrooming plumes and as flames crowned in the timber, a thunderous roar erupted sounding like a jet plane. The inferno shooting 400 feet in the air swallowed a stand of trees one hundred and fifty yards west of the eighty-five year old Inn. A ridge on the far side of the world's most famous geyser ignited and now the area was encircled by three ominous lines of flame. Propane tanks popped and a fuel truck blew up. Three hours after the North Fork fire raced through the complex, most of the structures were still standing. The wind had changed direction.

Satellite photographs on TV weather reports revealed the magnitude of smoke clouds that reached for hundreds of miles - as far away as New Mexico and Kansas, covering all of Wyoming, two-thirds of Utah, half of Colorado and two-thirds of Idaho. The fire area in Yellowstone was larger than the state of Delaware.

September 10: The willow in our yard sagged under four inches of heavy, wet snow. Showers and high humidity were forecasted for the day, cloudy and cooler. Snow and rain were widespread throughout Wyoming. There were still some flames and a concern that the fire would move into Mammoth, but officials were letting people back after the evacuation. The Fayette fire, the one that had flushed us out of the Winds, blew up on Wednesday. At Gardiner, a town at the northwest corner of Yellowstone, residents were asked to evacuate but were saved when thunderstorms broke.

One month later flames were still flickering in the park but all the fires were contained. All roads were open as well as several backcountry areas for overnight camping. Crews were mopping up hot spots. While 1,112 personnel remained on the lines, 560 Marines were scheduled to leave. The Greater Yellowstone Area Regional Fire Command was demobilized, an indication that fire activity was no longer considered threatening. The clouds had finally lifted and the snow level was down to 9000 feet. The south entrance that led to Jackson was

still closed. All others were open. It was National Park Day, the 76th anniversary of the National Park System.

By the time the first snow had fallen, fire had swept through 1.6 million acres destroying about forty buildings. More than \$112 million was spent fighting the blazes; nine thousand people had been engaged in the battle and one life was lost. The Yellowstone fires were the most severe fire season in the recorded history of the American West and had produced the greatest fire fighting effort in all of history.

Drafted in 1972, the fire policy allowed natural fires to burn unless they threatened human life or development or exceeded other "prescription" guidelines. "I didn't even know the policy existed," President Reagan said when Interior Secretary Donald Hodel returned to Washington. (I wonder if this policy was instituted because of government funding cutbacks to our national parks!)

The Yellowstone area had been visited by natural fires periodically in the past and its vegetative setting was in good part the product of fires that burned freely before white man arrived. A hundred-year history of fire suppression changed that. Had fires been set throughout the park on a large scale before the natural fire policy was adopted, thereby reducing the amount of dead and down trees, Yellowstone would have been brought back to the regime of frequent fires it evolved with and would have reduced the effects of this year's blazes. The conflagrations were entirely avoidable and due to policy mistakes.

Environmentalists said fire suppression was wrong. Politicians joined hunting outfitters in claiming the blazes could have been contained earlier. In the sixteen years Yellowstone National Park had operated under its natural fire policy, officials had not set a single controlled blaze to protect developments as the policy originally contemplated. When asked why prescribed burning had not been used to establish a protective buffer around developments, park officials had no answers.

"Though many plants, birds, mammals and invertebrates died in the fires, Yellowstone National Park didn't. As an ecological whole, it cranks along, an elegantly complex assortment of processes and states." ²

Fire has played a prominent role in my life. I was told that my birth records had burned and that the hospital had burned down. When I was eighteen my father, after reading my diary, forced me to throw it into the flames of our furnace. In 1994 our log cabin in Wyoming burned to the ground and we lost all our belongings collected over twenty-five years. It was a tremendous sense of loss, another in my life. "As I release the past, the new and fresh and vital enter," is part of my prayer I recite during my morning meditation.

YOU CAN'T GO HOME AGAIN

In September, I flew to Montreal to visit my parents, whom I hadn't seen in two years. They seemed foreign to me, their lives empty. They didn't communicate; they just went through the same actions I remembered, bereft of feelings. He went to work, she watched TV, he came home, she paid no attention to him, we sat down to dinner, and nobody talked.

I called a girlfriend from my McGill days. She was still married, had a boyfriend for years, and when she spent time with him her daughters covered for her. She seemed resigned to her life of pretense and because of orthodox religious dogma and an overbearing mother, she didn't dare change. Another friend from my sculpture class picked me up the next morning and, after driving downtown to a gallery where her sculpture was displayed, took me to lunch. When I returned to my parents' apartment, my mother was where I had left her - watching television. She glared at me without saying a word. When my father got home she met him in the hallway and when asked if we were having a good time, she complained that I had been out all day. The fact that I had been home for most of the time except about two hours gave her the excuse to belittle me and get his sympathy. Feelings reminiscent of my youth surfaced and I found I couldn't let it pass. She had lied and I had to defend myself, which was why we had fought all those years.

It directed my inarticulate anger towards my adoptive mother. My inability to discover the source of my anger contributed to an impasse between my adoptive mother and me, which remained, sadly, until her death." ¹

My oldest girlfriend Judy dropped by after work. She was divorced, remarried, a mother of two daughters, and as she brought me up-to-date with her life, I noted a slight rebelliousness in her demeanor and understood why we had been so close. She invited us to tea and on Sunday my parents and I went to visit Judy and her mother Miriam who hadn't seen me in twenty-eight years and gasped when she saw my grey hair because everybody she knew dyed theirs. We sat on their back porch and talked about the past. To my astonishment Judy reminded me of an incident in public school when a friend kidded me about being adopted. When I asked her at the time if it was true, she denied it because her grandmother had made her swear not to tell. Forty years later and it was still on her mind. I hadn't remembered the episode and was taken aback at her ease in talking so gingerly about something I was unable to discuss. I glanced at my parents who behaved as if they hadn't heard the remark. They obviously still couldn't come to grips with our situation and continued, as I, to exist in denial. I realized too that I didn't think about my adoption as often as other people did. In fact I didn't think about it at all until it came up in one way or another. And it always did. I was labeled "adopted." That's what people thought about me. I had lived for forty-eight years thinking otherwise.

We had moved to the living room for tea and cookies and were reminiscing as we pored

over family photo albums when my mother suddenly decided she wanted to leave. Even though we had been invited for dinner, she saw to it that we left against everybody's wishes. In the car she made the excuse that she thought I would like to see how the city had changed. She didn't want to go home because we had talked about eating out. Suddenly our afternoon was completely destroyed. We were in the car with nowhere to go and nothing to do. As usual, my father submitted to her.

I believed it was related to the adoption incident. My father said nothing, displaying an apathetic front, and my mother escaped, pretending it never happened. I sat in the back of the car, furious, resenting my parents for their betrayals of the past. The traffic was heavy, the day humid, I didn't want to go sightseeing, and my father didn't want to drive around the city. It was no coincidence that when we finally sat down to dinner at some steak and lobster joint, I accidentally knocked over my beer, spilling it onto my father's lap. I was angry at him for not saying anything and letting my mother get away with a decision that made everybody unhappy except her. "Be good to Ma." He let his wife have her own way, always humoring her, because he was guilty of something I found out about years later. We sat there, talking trivialities, while the most significant issue went unmentioned.

The next evening I asked again how they got me. To my surprise my mother began talking about how it had happened, so unexpectedly. All the neighbors brought things over - a crib, a bassinet, baby clothes. She spoke in warm tones about what a beautiful baby I was, while my father continued to eat his supper, eyes glued to his plate. She was actually relaxed, enjoying herself, but he remained quiet and somewhat anxious during her reverie. Was he nervous that she might spill the beans or just sullen because of the memories awakened in him? Had he lied to my mother about my origins? Did he know something she didn't? He squelched her enthusiasm with his usual impatience and she stopped talking. I too felt intimidated and didn't ask any more questions. There we were, three human beings who had lived together for twenty years, had been in contact for another twenty-eight, and were still painfully hindered by family secrets.

Who was I? Why was I so afraid to ask questions? If my parents couldn't face their failings, and they were my role models, how could I? They were strangers to me and when I left four days later, I wondered why I had bothered to go. I had been away for ten years and nothing had changed. We still didn't communicate nor enjoy spending time with one another, and it was alarmingly apparent how empty our relationship had become; perhaps it always had been.



When I returned home I received a letter from Susan saying we'd forgotten each other; she was upset that I hadn't called her when I was in Montreal. I accused her of always turning me out in the cold, a feeling with which I was introduced into the world and still couldn't overcome. I was actually protecting myself by not seeing her, not wanting to reopen the wound and go through all that hurt again, but at the same time doing to her what my mother had done to me. I see now that it must have been very difficult for her to have turned her back on me,

especially when we were so close, and she was trying to make up for it. But I was hurt and couldn't get over it. One day, she said, I would stop pushing her away. She was hoping for more than letters full of questions, wanted feelings and thoughts, loved me very much and missed me. I wondered what was happening in her life to suddenly warrant this.

Steve and I talked again about trying to find out about my origins. It wasn't something that urgently gnawed at my gut - it was just there - all the time.

✎ 1989 ✎

East Germany agreed to unite with West Germany and the Berlin Wall was dismantled. In Czechoslovakia a new non- Communist government came into being headed by playwright and former imprisoned dissident Vaclav Havel. On June 4 about 1000 young protesters who were calling for democratic rights were killed by security forces in Tiananmen Square, Beijing, China. The massacre was witnessed by the world as courageous television crews and reporters provided live coverage. A major earthquake devastated San Francisco. The Exxon Valdez supertanker disaster with the spillage of 64 million liters (just under 17 million gallons) of oil caused a major environmental disaster.

Elizabeth met a young man named Ted at the health food store where she worked and brought him home for dinner. After spending a few weeks together they left for Boulder, Colorado. She promised me she had enough money to get back on her own if the need arose. Two weeks later she wrote that she had rented a neat cabin in the mountains and she and Ted were becoming great friends. "I'll be okay as long as he helps with the dishes."

We purchased a 1982 Toyota long-bed truck, had a camper top made, installed a tiny woodstove that we bought from a friend, and worked on fixing it up for camping. A sectioned plywood platform for a bed spanned the width leaving enough room underneath for storage. I sewed curtains for the windows and made a screened partition so we could leave the back open in hot weather. We had a sunroof built into the top to see the stars and prevent claustrophobia. We were road-ready.

TURN TOWARDS CANADA

In our never-ending search for more space, privacy and remoteness, we decided to return to Canada once again, this time to the Rockies, so we threw our I Ching coins to see if the gods were friendly. The oracle clearly answered us:

Return: "Everything comes of itself at the appointed time. Return means coming back. Progress had been halted at every turn, and movement appeared impossible. Now the paths leading to renewed growth are revealing themselves. This situation can mean the returning to the beginning of one of your familiar old cycles or patterns. It furthers one to have somewhere to go, that is, to undertake something."

"Improvement, whatever you do. The new forces that have entered your life, refreshingly different and more vital than previously, will cause no conflict, no strained relationships, no discomfort to anyone. They are unanimously welcomed. Do not try to accelerate this change. It must be allowed to develop in its own slow, deliberate manner. To try to force it would be as foolish as disturbing the frozen earth over dormant seeds. This hexagram indicates a new force forming in an old relationship. Let the rhythmic waves of change move in their own time. What will happen has begun to happen. You sense its starting; as it proceeds you will sense its progress. Let it happen. Let it be."

❧ **Blaeberry Marsh** ❧
April 1989

Why does one leave the known for the unknown? Why do others stay behind and never look beyond the horizon? What motivates restlessness? Is it a pioneer spirit or an adopted person with no roots, wandering, always trying to recover a loved lost one?

"Jean Paton from Orphan Voyage has observed that illegitimate, orphaned and adopted persons tend to be restless wanderers, always in search of the elusive nirvana." ³

We had been seriously searching for land for six years in Idaho, Oregon, northern California and Washington. This trip to the far north was our second. Yellowstone, still in the throes of winter, looked like the aftermath of a war - black patches of earth and charred timber like stubble on a chin, remnants of last summer's fires. A winding road along the canyon of the Yellowstone River; an elk carcass half-eaten in a gully; brooding bison; smoking cauldrons; tiny volcanoes. Yellowstone was only forty-three miles north of the town in which we lived. But I still dreamed of a cabin in the wilderness with trees, a creek and a mountain view.

It was a clear day, ideal for driving. A hundred miles of the park, fifty to the Interstate in Montana, two hundred to Missoula and our favorite health food store, and a hundred more to a secluded campsite on Flathead Lake. An outdoor fire and a delicate drizzle on our camper top contributed to a mellow evening. In the morning we would cross into Canada.

"Get out and step to the side of the car," demanded the Canadian border guard. He climbed into the back of the truck and pulled apart everything he could get his hands on. When he found our homeopathic pills, we tried explaining what they were.

"They're placebos charged with energy. You know what a homeopathic is?" I Asked.

"I know what they are," he retorted. "You have no idea where people hide cocaine," he muttered. "You got any guns?"

"No," we said, but that didn't stop him. Steve joked that the next time he'd bring our cats because cat people don't carry guns.

"I have a lot of guns and I have cats," he snapped. By this time he had arrived at the head of the truck having left everything in complete disarray.

"What is it about us that you chose us?" asked Steve.

"I'm not gonna beat around the bush," he answered with a twisted grin. "All people from Wyoming carry guns."

After leaving the border behind we breathed a sigh of relief and turned on the eBe only to find that nothing had changed since our last trip. The Meech Lake Accord was still being debated; Benazir Bhutto, a woman, was the new premier of Pakistan; Catholics didn't want to talk about AIDS or condoms in the classroom; and Ronald Reagan was to be a guest speaker somewhere.

We headed up the Columbia River for two hundred kilometers and stopped at a health food store in a small town to ask about a realtor. The only one in town knew just what we were looking for and sent us, with a detailed map, to an old hunting lodge that had just come up for sale. There were three other properties close by, the last and largest the least interesting, he warned, "It's nothing but a swamp."

We found the logging road which passed through breathtaking country and our excitement mounted. The lodge, nestled in tall trees on a knoll against a huge rock, was definitely remote and needed a lot of work. We decided to spend the night in the truck to see how we felt. The property was situated next to a small farm with some screaming kids and clanging machines, and we were disappointed at how noisy it was. We moved on. After spending the following two nights on the other properties, we were not impressed and as a last resort decided to take a look at the "swamp."

A tree-lined, rough driveway led to an open meadow ringed with towering Douglas firs, unequalled mountain views and a rushing creek that caused our hearts to quicken. The sun's rays lit the morning mist and the surreal landscape glistened and breathed. Tiny webs shimmered in the crooks of branches as we made our way towards the edge of the bench

that overlooked an alluvial plain formed by the slackening waters of the creek and a marsh. It was precisely the piece of land we had longed for, an acreage accessible yet remote, no electricity or phone, and because there were no utilities the land was cheap. Before making a final decision, I wanted to check out the even more remote town of Jasper, remembered from a visit many years ago. This was only the beginning of our journey and even though we might have found exactly what we wanted, we had to be sure.

Just past Lake Louise, a campsite off the Ice field Parkway in Banff National Park materialized. Snow was predicted.

We awoke to six inches of it, lit the stove with dry branches stored under the truck, toasted some bread, brewed tea and decided to return to Lake Louise for information about road conditions. The ranger said the plows would be out sometime soon but we would be wise to wait a day.

The highway report was worse the next morning but the plows would open the road by noon. The mountains were visible in the pearly white atmosphere and each turn in the road rendered a more magnificent landscape.

After inquiring about land in Jasper - there was none available because it was all park - we headed towards Mt. Robson National Park and the Yellow head Highway. The landscape became very depressing with clear-cuts marring the mountain sides and slag heaps defacing the meadows. It was a long drive and we were happy to arrive in Kamloops and find a campground, a bit too neat and civilized but clean and empty.

The next morning we drove south through the Okanagan Valley, the fruit-growing capital of Canada, towards the American border. We were so close to the coast and I hadn't seen my oldest daughter for nine months but I couldn't make up my mind - to continue home or head west. I was actually afraid to reveal my feelings or to express my desires. I wasn't even sure if she would want to see me. Steve asked over and over again how I felt. I'm adopted. Feelings didn't count. Was I even allowed to have them? My fear of rejection stopped me from admitting that I wanted to see her. Tears clinched the deal. I took a chance and called. We turned west on Highway Three and headed for the coast.

Will this hole in me ever be filled with something besides fear? Being abandoned, cast aside, motherless, orphaned and unloved, it took some talking to realize that it had happened long ago and that I was here now with somebody who loved me. That should be enough. But obviously it wasn't.

We met Valerie's boyfriend for the first time. Their apartment was delightful and after dinner we talked about a lot of things and were surprised as to how little he knew about her background and the circumstances around her parents' divorce. When he accused me of not letting Elizabeth see her father and intimated that I was to blame for the divorce, things began to fall apart. His accusation got me in the gut and my insides shook while I tried to maintain a calm exterior. After all, he knew only what Valerie had told him, which is what distressed me

most of all. She, feeling guilty from having left me, wasn't capable of presenting a clear picture, and I tried to straighten him out, but fifteen years of anguish choked my attempt to defend myself. There are always two sides to every divorce.

We left the next morning. The physical act of driving insulated me from the harsh world of divorce, daughters and boyfriends, and feelings too raw to talk about. An attempt to sort them out only frustrated me. I was glad to have seen my daughter, and her boyfriend wasn't a mystery anymore. He was a jock with the gift of gab, superficial, quick to accuse, unaware of the deep psychological problems of his partner or himself, a replica of her father. I intuitively knew that this would be true but had hoped otherwise. Stupid of me. Valerie wrote a few days later and thanked us for dropping by. She felt a major weight off her shoulders now that we had met her boyfriend. They would like to come for a long weekend in the summer. She, like most children, was aware only of her hurt and unaware of mine.

We were interested in the marsh property but because we hadn't spent any time on the land, we felt a need to see it again before making an offer. Three weeks later, we returned, camped out for two nights, and then drove to the realtor's office. The property had been taken over by a bank who knew nothing about it. The realtor was certain that our proposal was too low but called them anyway, explaining that nothing had sold in that area for a long time and it would be beneficial for them to get rid of it. After all it was mostly "swamp." The realtor almost choked when I threw the word at him. They would let him know. We returned home and waited.

Our friend called from New York, surprised to find us back so quickly. "You went to Canada for four days? It's another country!" he shockingly declared. That's what's so charming about it. Two weeks later the property was ours. I believe the "swamp" spoken with the right inflection had clinched the deal.



With Elizabeth and her friend sampling the possibilities of living together and Valerie and Susan involved in their own lives, Steve and I, alone to face the world, took a much needed break and drove up Shadow Mountain for lunch. It was a sunflower-yellow, blue-sky day, the grassy meadows carpeted with soft sage. The winds picked up and cloud shadows brushed the valley floor. There was snow from the wall in Avalanche Canyon to the bottom of Shoshoko Falls and glimpses of trails once covered. It was almost time for a walk, a few of those intense uphill for which the Tetons are so well known, to strengthen my muscles for a backpacking trip into the Winds.

My father called to tell me he was having trouble with my mother, who needed a cane and had difficulty hearing. When parents, both in their nineties, start to get sick, they don't get better, and I knew the next few years would be demanding. I had dreaded this for a long time. Being so far away I knew I would feel guilty even though we weren't emotionally close anymore. My move west and the adoption secrets had gotten in the way.

Elizabeth returned at the end of June and a week later we all left for Canada to walk the

boundaries of our property and sign the closing papers. Heading north through Yellowstone, too early for Craig Pass, open only from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. and closed all night for road repair crews to work uninterrupted, we stopped at Lewis Lake for breakfast. Boggy areas, blue violets and a grizzly five hundred yards off the road. At West Yellowstone we left the park, passed Hebden Lake in eastern Idaho, where a few months ago a group of white power skinheads held a rally, and arrived at Big Arm, Montana in time for a swim in the lake. We slept under the trees, and awoke to scattered clouds and a few drops of rain. Road construction prolonged our passage and it wasn't until early afternoon that we arrived at our destination.

My heart quickened as we approached our driveway and because of spring overgrowth, we almost missed it. We parked above the meadow and stared at a forest in full bloom. Stands of birch gleamed in the sunlight, young spindly poplars crowded by spruce, pine and Douglas fir. It was thrilling to slosh through the marsh, our very own "swamp," wet with winter run-off, covered with fields of horsetail and orange tiger lilies, and identify animal tracks in the hardened clay. Elizabeth was speechless. As we approached the pond, two mating ducks fluttered off. The river, our western boundary, shimmered in the distance. Back through violets, Indian paintbrush, mauve, white and pink phlox, calypsos, kinnikinnik to the marsh where we spotted the fence at the south limit of our land, climbed the gully to the upper meadow and back across the creek to where our truck was parked. Wild berries stained our hands and mouths. We celebrated with a cold Molson's lager while chicken and vegetables cooked on our camp stove.

The realtor met us the next morning and with compass in hand located the four corners of our property. After signing the purchase papers we left for Yoho National Park and Lake Louise. The Chateau, majestically perched on the eastern shore overlooking the lake and massive Victoria Glacier, was swarming with people. We ate in the truck, sheltered from a cold wind, then drove through Banff and Kootenay Parks, crossing the divide back to the Columbia Valley. In a crowded provincial park we found a quiet campsite, fixed a light supper and walked down to the man-made lake. A strange place, manicured and mundane.

We awoke to the resonance of rain on the roof, cooked some eggs and after tea, packed up and entered the U.S. at a secondary border crossing just after it opened. It continued to rain as we drove south to Missoula, then proceeded east through the Ennis Valley to West Yellowstone. The officer at the park entrance warned we mightn't make Craig Pass before it closed. With thirty miles of countless curves and crawling campers we almost didn't. It was one minute to nine when a beacon of light appeared in the distance. At the last moment the guard at the gate waved us through and closed the barrier behind us. The Tetons were a welcome sight as Elizabeth drove south to our turnoff. A tornado had torn through town while we were gone, but only one of our fences was down and the cap to our stove pipe rested a few yards from the house.



After Elizabeth departed for college in Oregon, Steve and I left for Canada to build a cabin with

a hammer and a handsaw. It was an enjoyable journey along the Rocky chain to our piece of paradise tucked into a fold of the Continental Divide. A purple and pink sunset against a pale turquoise sky, the magic of the marsh, a meadow of soft pastels, crackling leaves drifting. We were surrounded by vacant land except for one neighbor to the north who owned sixty-three Siberian huskies that barked every time someone coughed twenty miles away. We emptied our belongings into an 8' x 12' canvas tent at the top of the driveway so we could sleep in the bed of the truck.

The next day we discovered a small lumber mill close by where we picked out 2x6s for a foundation, carrying them, one by one, down to the tentative house site we had chosen on the edge of the marsh. Faced with eighty acres we gravitated towards the middle of the property next to the creek. Finding a path through the trees to our rugged retreat, not wanting to cut down trees needlessly, took a few days. We carried forty-three roughhewn 2x4s, which looked like they came straight out of the Civil War, nine 2x6s and three sheets of plywood a thousand feet from the truck. In the process we got to know the lay of the land and figured out where to put a road that had a few slight curves and missed all the trees. That evening we washed in the creek while a glorious sunset faded over the western peaks.

A few days later a farmer we met who lived four miles away appeared with his backhoe and, following me down our path, cleared bushes and leveled the ground until we had a road. The cost - \$25. We were finally able to drive to the site. The cabin would be in shade in the dead of winter because of the tall trees but near the creek, which was more important. We lugged large rocks from the creek for the foundation and moved the tent from the upper meadow to the bench above the marsh.

On the second day of October we awoke just before sunrise and waited for the sun to crest over the rocky outcropping of the eastern mountains. As a stand of young birches overlooking the marsh sprung to life, luminescent against a backdrop of emerald green, we started the foundation. Our happiness and excitement were channeled into work while the world we left a week ago went on outside our gate.

Steve sawed and I hammered. We supported the foundation on rocks and leveled for hours, and, every so often, looked around, overwhelmed at where we were and what we were doing - washing our dishes by the creek, posting "no hunting" signs (donated by neighbors), collecting wood, carrying water and getting familiar with our trees. My hands were permanently grimy with charred wood stains and dirty, broken fingernails. We bathed and washed our hair in the creek and I loved it.

Bear prints on the marsh this morning. Every slight breeze caused dry leaves to fall and swirl, creating an autumn carpet of green and gold, sounding like footsteps in the woods. Our dreamlike existence was interrupted when a letter from Susan arrived at our mailbox one mile down the road. She had to put her cat to sleep because she didn't have the money to do whatever it was that had to be done, and she had never faced reality like that before. Neither had I when I was forced to sell her horse and wasn't able just to give her away because I needed the money after the divorce. She said she thought of me often and regretted much of

our past. "You're my mother and I'm your middle daughter and that should be enough to keep us in touch, but somehow sadly it isn't."

Elizabeth was searching for a place to rent in Olympia. She worked at the co-op, had signed up for writing and African dance classes, and volunteered at an organic farm, getting all the free produce she wanted.

On the fifth day we finished the fourth wall. The siding, first-cut wood slats from the mill, was free for the taking - so far the lumber had cost \$90.



We were invited to the farmer's house to see their newborn piglets. There were too many for the mother to feed. The strongest piglets suckled while the others had to be bottle-fed and were noticeably smaller than their breast-fed siblings by about a third. The mothering quality was different and the orphans suffered.

"They had a slow start but caught up pretty quick. Look at Gizzy!" exclaimed the farmer's wife. Gizzy was another tiny pig whose life she had saved. "There's a huge disadvantage in being a normal pig ... fat and sassy ... they're the first to go!"

Suddenly I began to identify with the bottle-fed piglets and could un-questionably see the difference between them and the others nurtured by their mother. I was sure the orphans developed a low profile of themselves. Was I slow at the beginning? How did I suffer? Little did I know that watching these orphaned piglets was an event that would eventually change my life.

Back to our building: The structure was up, the rafters on, and a plywood roof finally closed the cabin. Mist in the valley, no sun for a few days but much warmer. Our laundry hung from bungee cords stretched across the inside of the camper and dried by the woodstove. Valdy, one of Canada's cherished folk musicians, called it the simple life.

Steve had a dream last night, its essence being "take time to smell the roses," so we took the day off, Canadian Thanksgiving, and drove to Emerald Lake in Yoho National Park.

A couple building a large log cabin up the road dropped by to borrow some nails and invited us for a trout dinner where we learned about diagonals to strengthen our walls. Another neighbor gave us two windows and while Steve sided the cabin I installed the first of them. Still another, who lived on the hill behind us, rode over on his horse and invited us to tea. That night we ate our first meal in our cabin.

Valerie sent some warm clothes because it had suddenly turned cold and most of our things were in Wyoming.

The guy up the road dropped by early one morning to see how we were doing because the

temperature had dropped considerably during the night. We were frozen and barely able to get out of the truck. Negligent about stocking up with twigs the night before, the wood scattered about was icy and wouldn't catch. He drove us to his trailer to warm up. It took a few hard-earned lessons to learn that one cannot get lax living in the wilderness. If you were going to live by your wits, then you had to have your wits about you.

Collecting and stacking firewood, hauling water from the creek, keeping our potty clean and empty, and showering once a week at a motel in town kept us busy. We seemed to love this way of life and tried to figure out why. Both of us came from a world of comfort and here we were, striving to rid ourselves of excess and subsist on the bare necessities.

"It is worth the while to have lived a primitive wilderness life at some time, to know what are, after all, the necessities of life and what methods society has taken to supply them." ⁴

I finished the roof and built a door while Steve constructed a small porch to keep our entrance dry. We insulated walls and ceiling, then covered the fiberglass with plastic using our new staple gun. The insulation gave the cabin a padded-cell effect, sometimes slightly claustrophobic. Three weeks later, we spent our first night in the cabin, which was just a bit larger than the truck. It was exciting to be upright in the evening. A loft to store our sleeping bags transformed the bed (sections from the pickup placed on large blocks) into a couch during the day. A counter held the propane stove, basin, cutting board and utensils. We had completed an intense three-week, self-taught course on how to build a cabin in the wilderness without power for under \$500.

Birch, poplar, fir and pine - we would try them all and decide what was best to burn. In Wyoming, so high and dry, everything burned. The roof needed work, the stove, patching, the foundation, rocks, and the windows, cleaning. Things were finding their places: boots, ponchos, pillows, dry goods, water jugs, radio, type-writers, art supplies, books.

We could hear the marsh below; saw coyote and elk; a jay perched on our sawhorse; a squirrel as busy as we were, stocking up for winter; over fifty honking Canadian geese flew across the marsh and up the valley; a red-headed pleated woodpecker knocking a hole in a hollow tree. We hadn't even taken time to walk to the river. Tomorrow would mark four weeks since we arrived. The fir tree towering just outside the cabin put things into perspective. How small were we compared to the other forces of nature.

It was October 21st, Valerie's twenty-seventh birthday and the fifth day of after-shocks since the earthquake in the San Francisco/Santa Cruz area. The upper level of the Oakland Bay Bridge had collapsed and many died. CBC, aside from the hourly news, seemed like a mellow station. Damp foggy mornings, the sun hadn't shone for the last ten days, so we were working with wet wood.

We still had to trim the trees in the driveway and measure the distance from our cabin to the road to see if electricity was feasible for a truck hookup against cold winter days. If not, a generator would do the same job. That evening we invited the couple up the road for a

candlelight dinner. They had us over often and were a great help while we were building: it was nice finally to be able to reciprocate.

We awoke the next morning to the hoots of an owl and prepared to leave for Wyoming. It was dark and cold as we crossed the threshold from our primitive existence into the modern world and drove south along the Columbia Valley, passed through customs at the border, stopped at the health food store and had our first hot bath (so different from a shower) in a month that evening in a Missoula motel. We arrived home in time to celebrate my forty-ninth birthday and I spent all day on the phone taking care of business, after which we both decided to return to Canada and build another addition.

Eight inches of snow fell in Wyoming the next day and when I spoke to Valerie, she told me there was a huge snowstorm across Canada. Winter was wending its way into the wilderness. Two weeks later, with all three cats, we drove through a white-out on Teton Pass on our way back to the far north. We were in the boonies again, watching our nine-inch color TV run by our new, muffled Honda generator. While it snowed we built a foundation for our new addition with logs and railroad ties we had foraged.

After a few grueling but satisfying days, the addition was closed in. We had our first bath in twelve days by filling a black plastic tub with water heated on the wood stove. It snowed during the night while we slept in our new bedroom.

A heavy snowfall forced us to clear the road by dragging a handmade plow of railroad ties behind the truck. It continued to snow lightly while we chopped wood and hauled water from the creek which was almost iced over. Then we cross-country skied around our land for the first time; through snowy woods, across meadow and marsh, along the creek to the river and back around the pond to our warm cabin. It took most of the afternoon and we never left our property.

Elizabeth arrived for Christmas and Valerie bused across British Columbia to join us. Not minding the rough living, they slept together in sleeping bags on the floor by the stove. I was glad to have my girls with me.

Valerie left after the weekend and the day after Christmas Elizabeth joined her on her way back to Olympia. That night Valerie told Elizabeth about her new job, embarrassed that she was continuing in the same type of work. When she had visited us and we had discussed her plans, she had lied to us, pretending to seek our advice, all the while knowing what she was intending to do. My illusion about my kids being strong, happy, secure and loving human beings is destroyed when things like this happen. She was just a frightened, insecure child, not too different from her mother.

Elizabeth's call upset me. I resented Valerie for having told her boyfriend so little about our history and for blaming me. How could I reach into my heart and rid myself of the wrath and resentment I still held towards a man who had no boundaries and who had brainwashed our children into hating me because I left him. What does a woman do? It is destructive to harbor

hatred towards anybody. How can I turn it into compassion and by my behavior teach my children a constructive, loving way of life?

FINALLY FACING THE "A" WORD

✎ 1990 ✎

The White House refused to acknowledge the reality of global warming. The needs of corporations came first. When Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, President Bush decided to go to war with Iraq even though the sanctions made by the United Nations were succeeding. He needed an excuse to promote his esteem among voters.

Valerie wrote that she had a good time with Elizabeth, was sorry about having lied to us and wanted us to know she still had plans to do something more creative. She needed to please both parents and was afraid that she could never be herself. She loved me very much and needed my support and friendship most of all.

She wrote again that since we hadn't corresponded with one another for months, she had obviously done something to create this void. Three weeks later another letter arrived saying that she wondered if she would ever hear from me again.

I needed a rest. I felt betrayed when she lied to us in an attempt to get closer to her father. She wasn't addressing her issues but tried to make me believe she was.



In April we left for Canada again with a third addition in mind - a larger bath- room for our composting toilet. The last fifty feet of the 8429' Teton Pass were icy and snow packed. We could see winter receding into the mountains as we drove along the west side of the range. There was nothing as far as the eye could see, and then a barn. Black cows against green fields that disappeared into invisible foot- hills. Idaho governor Cecil Andrews made a surprising "critical crisis" choice after pro-choice women across America boycotted Idaho potatoes. Isn't it strange how a few old geezers sit around making decisions on women's issues?

A cup of peppermint tea hit the spot after a stop to get our spines aligned in St. Anthony, where shaped trees and manicured lawns reminded me how few of us are drawn to the wilderness anymore. A tree too close to another didn't develop on that side. Unhampered on the other its branches reached out into space and I thought about myself. Have I been handicapped because of my adoption? A snowstorm cleared as we crossed the border into Canada and, after four more hours of driving, reached our property.

The cabin was as we had left it except for mice droppings. It took a few hours to clean up, settle in and get used to being alone again. The marsh was hypnotic.

We couldn't see the mountain goats in the early morning because the huge rock they hung out

on was in shadow. A young elk emerged from the trees, strutted into the meadow and checked the premises for two does who followed moments later. They all disappeared amidst the thick second-growth. The buds had just bloomed and the distant logging road would soon disappear. I forgot about the road during run-off because there was less traffic up the valley, but without the lumber trucks, there wouldn't be a road. The flutter of a grouse brought me back to our cabin in the Canadian woods and my hammering. We reluctantly left three and a half weeks later.

"His name is ... ," Elizabeth said, and after a moment of silence ... "I know, I know, Ma." Her new boyfriend had the same name as her father which proves, to me at least, that blood is thicker than water. Twenty years of input from Steve didn't stand a chance when it came to blood. At least she could walk into the house and say it like it was. So where does that leave me? My blood was a mystery to me. Whose veins had it run through? Who was pulling my strings and influencing my decisions? It made me think of my real father, wondering what part of me reflected him. Who was he? What was he like? Was he still alive? Did he know about me?

In the middle of June we returned for a month to build a fourth addition. By now our tar-paper shack, as one of the neighbors referred to it, was becoming a house. We added an 8'x12' room on the front which would become our kitchen. We could now do our dishes while watching the sunset and the movement of wild- life in the marsh below.

I suppose our trips to this northern country where I was born stirred an ancestral awareness, but the impetus to start searching truly arose after our visit to the farm where I had seen the new-born piglets and had that epiphany eight months earlier. I remembered throwing the coins and reading the hexagram from the I Ching before leaving for Canada.

"The time of darkness is past. Everything comes of itself at the appointed time. Return means coming back. Return leads to self-knowledge."

We are moved by a Great Spirit only when the time is right. For the first time I started to think about my life, I mean really think about my life. The next day in the library I whispered to Steve to ask the librarian if she had anything on adoption. I was forty-nine years old and still intimidated by the A-word. A pile of books came home with me and as I started to read, the tears fell, and the more I read, the more I cried. I was hit with a tidal wave of information, of feelings and fantasies I had been avoiding all my life. I was just like all these people when I was never like anybody before.

"Rejection is an unnatural act, the forsaking of a child by its mother, severing the closest relationship in the human experience. Avoiding the unpleasant issue of rejection, some parents falsely picture the birth parents as dead. Actually they may have introduced a more onerous vision for their children to dwell upon: the responsibility of their parents' deaths." ¹

"Adoption is a cataclysmic rupture in our most primal relationship, shaking our earliest sense of security, signaling abandonment and leaving deep wounds." ²

"Taking a child from one set of parents and placing her with another set who pretend that the child is born to them disrupts a natural process. The need to be connected with one's biological and historical past is an integral part of one's identity information." ³

I read on, book after book, and cried a lot, sometimes wrenching, uncontrollable feelings in the pit of my stomach. So this was my story ... my dark side ... the shadow part of me ... the mystery of my life.

"The children have to know. It can't be helped. Adoption is their cross to bear." ⁴

"In legal terms, we, the illegitimate, have no roots, no ancestral heritage. The adoptee is handed over in a contractual agreement to a responsible couple. We have been refused a basic human right - access to our ancestry." ⁵

"An adoption agency 'sealed record' contains the records of both the birth parents and the couple who comes to adopt and pertinent medical, legal, personal and family information including identification information. When the adoption has been legalized, this combined record is sealed by the agency. The record can be opened to answer questions by the adoptive parents, the adoptee, or the birth parents. However no identifying information, names, is ever released. Another 'sealed record' comprised the original birth certificate issued within the first few days after the child's birth, which contains information of both birth parents. The child, although legally relinquished and placed for adoption, retains his/her true identity until the judge, in court, legalizes the adoption, issues an adoption decree, and orders a new, amended birth certificate, registering the child under his/her adoptive parents' names. At the time, the original birth certificate is removed from the local and state files, sealed and refiled elsewhere."

I had opened a Pandora's box not knowing where this was going to lead but I was inexorably on my way. I realized I had never wanted to search before for fear of hurting my parents. Now because of my mother's deteriorating condition, her grip on me had loosened, which allowed me the freedom to search.

"The seeds of denial were unwittingly planted and internalized by the child who learned to ignore her needs, in order not to hurt her parents. The feelings of rejection, loss and pain associated with being adopted often became deeply buried in order to preserve harmony in the family." ⁷

How does one secure that original, unaltered birth certificate? In each book there were lists of others on adoption. The copies the library didn't have I ordered or found in secondhand bookstores. I read on realizing what I had denied and what I now needed to do. The authors expressed feelings I had never dared to express or didn't know existed.

I had always thought I had a perfect childhood. But I was living in denial until now when I decided I had to recognize that I was adopted and deal with it. Those who say that nothing is wrong have the least chance of recovering from a crisis.

"Rejection is every adoptee's middle name. Sad as it is to accept, adoption is not all it's cracked up to be. To believe that your adoption experience has been perfect is to be in denial. By being in denial you are running away from painful feelings about yourself and your life. Running only makes it worse. If you're not prepared to deal with the truth, you're not ready to search. Birth mothers never forget. Tucked away somewhere is her memory of you. It appears on your birthday and on the day she surrendered you. Expect to feel very emotional as your search progresses. Feelings mean you're doing your work. If you're not feeling anything, chances are you're running from something. Searching will make you stronger and you may answer questions you have about yourself but it will also bring new complications in your life and possibly new relationships you'll have to deal with. It is understandable to experience rage at what has happened to you and at your birth mother. Searching is not the end, it's only the beginning." ⁸

This was an enormous task, this adoption business. What had happened to me? Why had it happened to me? Am I different from everybody else? What was the difference? Who am I? There was actually a woman out there who gave birth to me. I had never thought about her. I guess I never really thought about anything. Well, I had something to think about now. Steve listened, prodded me on, and was there when I got lost.

At the back of one of the books were addresses of support groups, search consultants, national and international registries, and suggestions for help. I wrote to Mrs. Eleanor Bott, head of Parent Finders in Quebec, telling her what I knew, which wasn't very much: my birth date, place of birth, adoptive parents' names and the penciled notes on the back of my birth certificate I thought to be in my father's handwriting. I sent a copy to their national headquarters in Vancouver and another to Orphan Voyage in the United States. I hesitated before mailing these letters. I could have been the result of a rape or maybe my mother was in a mental institution or she might be dead or a prostitute or she may have committed suicide or ... I also wrote to the Director of the Adoption Division in the Quebec City Department of Social Affairs asking for information, non-identifying as it was called, which included medical information and the circumstances surrounding my relinquishment, everything except my birth parents' names.

"Healing begins when adoptees take control of their lives by making the decision to search. The difference between those who search and those who don't lies in how they formed their defensive structures as children: how much they denied, repressed and split off. The decision is not made in one impulsive moment, but is arrived at over a period of time as the self gradually evolves from one level of consciousness to another. Healing is a process. Finding one's heritage enables the adoptee to become grounded in biological and historical reality." ⁹

Dealing with it means it's not a secret; dealing with it means admitting it; dealing with it doesn't mean solving or changing; it means it exists, it's a real thing.

"This is precarious territory we are trespassing on. It threatens to open up and swallow the one identity I have; as manufactured and as shaky as that is, at least it is me." ¹⁰

In mid-July we left Canada and arrived in Wyoming the next day to find that the letter I had written to Eleanor Bott of Parent Finders had been returned so I called her and learned that her address had changed. I told her I was looking for my birth parents, I was forty-nine and my adoptive parents were eighty-seven. "Oh, so you won't hurt anybody," she replied. She understood. She wasn't working for Parent Finders anymore but asked me to send her a letter about myself.

A letter from Joan Vanstone, National Director of Parent Finders in Vancouver, suggested I write to Jewish Family Services in Montreal to obtain a background history profile and to request a search be made for my birth mother asking her for a reunion contact with me. Quebec law gave me this opportunity. She told me to ask for: any medical history in my file; my mother's age, occupation and marital status at the time of my birth; her nationality and place of origin; her sisters and brothers; my grandparents' occupations and origin (both maternal and paternal); whether I have any natural brothers or sisters, and if so, what ages, where born; information on my birth father and his extended family; whether I was born in an urban or rural area. I was to send a Xerox copy of my birth certificate for identification and the full names of my adoptive parents (who would not be notified of my request). Once my background history was received I should Xerox it and send it to her, along with a completed Parent Finders membership form, so she could place my birth information in their National Reunion Register. A note on the back of her letter gave me another address if my background was not Jewish: Ville Marie Social Services Centre, an establishment responsible for preserving adoption files in Montreal. Not knowing my birth background, I wrote to both.

In early August I received a letter from Eleanor Bott offering to help me in my search. She told me to register my information with Parent Finders, which I had already done, in case my biological mother was looking for me. She advised that if it had been a private adoption, not through an agency, it would be impossible in this province to learn anything, but I could place an ad in the local newspaper on my birthday using her local phone number. If my biological mother happened to see it she would be more likely to call her than a long-distance number. I couldn't mention the name of the doctor who had delivered me because it was against the law. She told me that this was how she located her daughter.

The next day I received a letter from the Quebec government's Minister of Health and Social Services answering my request for non-identifying information about my birth and advising that they had sent my request to Ville Marie Social Services Centre, to whom I had already written. Things were moving along slowly and I felt as if I was taking care of business. I now talked openly about my adoption and thought that after enough time I might actually reach my goal, not ever understanding how profound was this plight of mine, how emotionally disturbing it might become, and how long it might take.



On the 20th of August, when Elizabeth had five days off work and I was waiting for mail, we decided to take a walk in the Winds. Her VW Bug smelled of gas after filling up in Jackson and

we wondered why as we drove south towards the Cora turnoff and then seventeen miles on gravel to the New Fork Lakes entrance. A pack trip on horseback was leaving as we took a last look at her car to make sure we had everything, and the wrangler told us about "one of the best campsites" where we were headed.

The trail, high on a hill, followed the northwest shore of the lake, and finally crossed the forest boundary into wilderness, climbing into the steep, rock-walled New Fork Canyon. After six miles and two tricky river crossings, we ascended to a meadow at 8,800', exhausted and desperate for a campsite. Forging the river again to a well-used area with a lot of horse shit, probably the spot that the wrangler had mentioned, we pitched our tent and cooked dinner just as it started to drizzle. Because this was bear country we hung our food far enough away from our tent: A rock tied to one end of a long cord whose other end was fastened to the food bag was pitched over a high branch at just the right distance away from the trunk so that if a bear climbed up it couldn't reach the bag. The filled sack was then heaved up to at least twenty feet off the ground and the cord secured around the tree trunk. We usually had a good laugh performing this task. Either the rock got loose and flew through the air, or the cord got tangled around the branch, or we'd lose the end that we were holding, or the food bag would be too heavy to lift high enough. Realizing we had forgotten to include some pills and toothpaste, we lowered the bag and rehung it. Then we did it again to add a used tea bag. We hadn't spent so much time together in the last four months and felt disoriented which was evident by having to hang our food three times. It rained softly while sudden wind gusts shook the tent, thunder rumbled in the distance, and lightning reflected overhead. We were both feeling the first day's exhaustion and dozed on and off, relaxed.

We awoke at 7:00 to find the tent fly wet, the ground soaked and the sky blue. The high ridges reflected the rising sun while the valley floor was still in shade. The tree tops turned gold as we walked the two miles to the steep narrow Palmer Canyon Trail. It was cold and windy at the lake when we stopped for lunch and we didn't linger, picking up the Double top Mountain Trail going east for six miles to Summit Lake. We walked on, getting more weary as we passed through basins, dells and gulches, losing and gaining altitude continuously until suddenly cresting a rise where an open meadow with No Name Lakes came into view. As we rounded a sprawling hillock, isolated, cerulean Summit Lake cradled in extensive tundra-like meadows materialized against an azure sky pierced by the peaks of the Continental Divide. The country fell away on all sides and clouds drifted at eye level.

The 10,500' terrace on this side of the range was a country of clustered pine and spruce scattered through expansive meadows of wild flowers, meandering streams, and countless lakes, ponds and marshes, so one could walk for miles without losing altitude. Quinoa and vegetables at 7:00 p.m. and two hands of gin rummy sent us to bed, too tired to talk.

The next day we awoke at 8:10 a.m. to a blue sky. After yesterday's strenuous hike, taking time to smell the roses was our aim for the day. We roamed around the lake, and we tried, without success, to talk a fisherman out of one of his trout. After an outstanding dinner of pasta, vegetables and salad of freshly picked blue-bell leaves, we burned our garbage and kept the fire going while the temperature dropped. We were finally forced into our sleeping

bags at 9:30. Elizabeth wanted me to try her new down bag that I had sewn from a Frostline kit. It felt like I was cradled in cloud, convincing me to make one for myself and another for Steve. After she got into my twenty-year old bag, she remarked, "God, Ma, this is what the Boy Scouts get by on."

At 8:30 a.m. there were light clouds floating in a basin of blue. After breakfast we packed my smaller backpack with rain gear, lunch, warm clothes, map, first aid kit, and water, and headed north through Green River Pass to the Glacier Trail cutoff, a poorly marked junction which we had trouble finding. We climbed to Vista Pass, descended to the canyon of the Green River and made our way through rock slides 1000' up to Cube Rock Pass. Aqua-blue Peak Lake came into view far below. Up a steep, rocky path to 11,150' Shannon Pass and on to dramatic Elbow Lake, nestled in a barren basin of smooth rock. Hail forced us to seek cover and under Elizabeth's poncho, we quickly dressed in all our clothes and ate lunch while leaning against a boulder shielded from a sharp wind. Some ginseng tincture warmed us as hailstones bounced off the poncho and the ground around us. When the sun appeared we continued on through craggy, fault-fractured country so beautiful that we promised to return. After a long stormy day, the depression of Summit Lake in the distance brought a feeling of relief. A dark wall of cloud was moving in and the wind had picked up with sounds of thunder on its tail.

I was getting my long hair brushed while we enjoyed some dried bananas and tea. There always came a time when we had to change the gas canister and we talked about being able to recycle it, not adding to the world's waste. A welcome dinner fulfilled us as we talked about the men we each had known and what they had in common. A storm suddenly descended upon us, shaking our shelter and causing the rain fly to balloon and beat against the tent. We continued our discussion until Elizabeth fell asleep, awoke at 1:30 to answer the call of nature and then we talked some more until 4:00 a.m.

We wondered why we loved hiking in the wilderness. Elizabeth: I love a primitive life - with no amenities. The mountains force you into it. I love hot baths but love to bathe in cold water; to carry everything on my back and rely on nobody. There are no mirrors, no peer pressure. I don't like the familiarity of social life where everyone is polite, putting up facades, but in the mountains all that is dropped. I just like being in the wind, the trees and the rocks. That's where I feel most natural. Being with you, you're just the closest to nature and I can spill my heart out. There's nothing to judge, nothing gets in the way. Time is very different here, something felt and lived. Actually there's no time - just morning, day and night. We were so damaged with the divorce, the mountains are soothing and natural, a visceral cushion. That's why I go with you.

I couldn't have put it better myself. A mother needs time to tell her daughter about her life. She's got me cornered and can ask whatever she pleases. And I can answer. There's nobody to judge or hear my secrets.

By dawn the storm had passed. Rather than hiking the Highline to the New Fork Trail which crossed a divide to Lozier Lakes, we decided on a diagonal route. Heading west, we left the

trail after No Name Lakes and searched the landscape for cairns. Finis Mitchell, the American forester based in Wyoming, described this route: "*As long as Glover Peak, the highest summit west of the Highline Trail, was to the northeast, keep going around it.*"¹¹ We were apprehensive without a compass or topographic map but, being seasoned hikers, we were enticed about a new way out rather than retracing our steps. With eyes on Glover we headed north, passing lakes and tarns and climbing ridges that approached like ocean waves. Thunderheads in the distance roused my fears and figuring them to arrive by late afternoon, I hoped to be off this high plateau by then. We were above timberline and could see for miles except what was over the next ridge. Suddenly a footprint in the gravelly earth helped to allay our burgeoning fear and we walked on. Eliza- beth finally dropped her pack and ran ahead to see beyond the next ridge while I rested on a rock. Another ridge. I was getting worried; if we were near the cliffs, then we were too far west. It was the third time that she ran ahead when I heard a yell. She could see the trail far below. We finally found what we thought was a break in the escarpment and she dropped down while I lowered my pack over the edge into her waiting arms. We continued down and as the slope became more gradual, we came upon a creek which we followed to the trail. I humbly got down on my hands and knees and kissed the earth.

It was late afternoon as we climbed to Lozier Lakes, where we would camp that night. The storm front was moving in quickly. There was no level ground and we hastily set up the tent in a tiny area fringed with stunted spruce, cooked dinner and climbed into our bags with not a moment to spare. The tempest descended in all its fury. Thunder shook my insides and lightning flashed relentlessly. I had left our stainless steel pots at the doorway and reached out to push them as far away as possible for fear a lightning bolt might be lured our way. The rumbling rolled in from the distance, passed overhead and pressed on. The lightning warned of another blast and I waited, preparing myself. On and on into the night, the turbulence even woke Elizabeth, who usually slept through everything. We stared at one another, wondering if we would get out alive. As the hours passed the storm moved eastward, making room for its aftermath, driving rain, more lightning and wind. At first light I peeked out into the silence to find we were buried under a heavy layer of snow.

We decided to pack up during a lull and head for lower country where we would feel like less of a target. The sun peered out periodically, warming our chilled bones, melting our frosty hiking boots as we descended into the trees in a light snow. Our footsteps were muffled in the hush of falling flakes and the stillness sensitized our awareness and slowed our mindless hurry home. Switchbacking down a steep canyon amongst lodgepole pine, subalpine fir and Engelmann spruce, we traveled dreamlike through a soft veil of crystalline mist, hardly speaking. As we dropped towards the river, the forest changed to stands of quaking aspen, Oregon grape, yarrow, aster and lupine. We reached the canyon floor, passed through New Fork Park where we had camped a century ago, and as the day cleared, we emerged from the trees to view the lakes in the far distance. Our wet boots and sweatpants made the fifteen-mile walk out uncomfortable. We congratulated each other with a handshake, the completion of yet another walk in the wilderness, and another safe return from a heroic hike. Next time the compass would go into our packs first.

As always, I had mixed emotions on leaving. The time with my daughter was very precious and, as we renewed our ties, our similarities reminded me that I had a blood relative on this earth. Able to be silent with a full understanding of our feelings made me aware of our secure connection and love in a world fraught with alienation and suffering. These walks were our private time to lower the dam and deal with emotions we held in check when apart. The feeling of survival gave me an independence and strength that I could live by my own wits. We drove home with a deep calmness, satisfied that we had taken the time to renew our mother-daughter bond once again.



A letter from Eleanor Bott arrived. She thought the hospital where I was born was the Catherine Booth, the only one for unwed mothers at that time. There was an original birth certificate which was impossible for me to obtain because those records were sealed. Even if I had my birth mother's name, it would be hopeless. "I know many who have tried," she confessed. She thought my mother was Catholic because a baby had to be baptized within a week of its birth, as I had been according to my birth certificate. She included the address and classified rates for the Gazette to place an ad and said she'd watch the paper on my birthday and send me the ad.

Talk about searching for a needle in a haystack. If my birth mother were French, she wouldn't buy the Gazette. One ad forty-nine years later? Why would she suddenly start looking after so much time had elapsed? She may have moved or never have lived in Montreal or may not even still be alive. Perhaps a relative who knew about me might see the ad. Does she think about me on my birthday? Does she even remember my birthday? The whole idea seemed so far-fetched. Outrageous as it was, I had to try and somehow when you try, there always seems to be hope.

At the end of the month the Coordinator of Adoption of the Ville Marie Social Service Centre sent, in response to my request for adoption disclosure services, applicant forms to complete along with proof of my identity, a strange request since that was what I was looking for. If they had files relating to me, they would forward my request to whichever local office had the appropriate records, which would in turn inform me of the waiting period for services. In cases of private adoption, no central office may have any records, but they advised me that they would register my request so there would be a record in case any subsequent inquiry were made. Several hundred requests were received each year and there were no additional funds enabling them to increase staff members to perform the work. They currently had a waiting list of over 750 cases and respectfully requested my patience. I had waited almost fifty years. I supposed I could wait a little longer.

"As long as you're always wondering about what went on years ago, your past is alive; it's in the present. To put it to rest, you have to deal with it and then move away from it. Then you can get on with your life in the present. I was a person caught in a circumstance over which I had no control. This sense of powerlessness started with being adopted and has extended to include other circumstances in my life as well." ¹²

In September Linda Crenwelge, a woman writing a book on research, wrote that Jean Paton of Orphan Voyage had forwarded a copy of my letter to her with some active contacts in Montreal. I had already written to all of them. She wanted to know if I had ever asked my parents for my adoption papers, noting that her adoptive parents had always told her that they didn't have any information but when they sent her papers to her it had her birth name. Since she knew the city in which she was born, she wrote a letter to all the families with that last name and within two weeks found both birth parents and six siblings. You never know!

A sudden call from my father in Montreal brought my search to a halt. He was going in for a prostate operation and, because my mother was already in the hospital, needed help. I was on a plane the next day flying in a direction I hadn't taken for years.

My parents and I had continued to grow apart since my divorce and my move west. Perhaps Steve and I living together without being married made them uncomfortable; they didn't have a legitimate son-in-law. Or they believed that the problems with my ex and the children had been caused by my suing for divorce. Any warmth we once had was long gone.

The taxi ride from Dorval Airport to downtown Montreal gave me time to gather my thoughts and take a look at the city, which had changed considerably in the last twenty years. Many English-speaking residents had left Quebec and the French had taken over. I paid the cab driver and climbed the hill to the ancient, turreted, sprawling hospital where as a young girl I had my tonsils and one adenoid removed and as a grown woman had given birth to my daughters. My father seemed glad to see me. He was reluctant to tell me they had found cancerous spots on his prostate; he wasn't convinced that he was in the clear. I stayed for a while and then took a cab to another hospital to see my mother. To my dismay she had been placed in the emergency ward because there were no other beds available. She too seemed happy to see me. She appeared smaller than I remembered and her heels were full of fluid from the harshness of the sheets and not being moved enough. Everybody was far too busy to pay attention to her; this was not a serene place. I stayed until she drifted off to sleep and then walked slowly to my parents' apartment, about seven blocks from the hospital. The retired nurse my father had hired to give my mother her meals had decided to go on vacation while I was there and I had my work cut out for me. My father called to tell me he was going to be moved to a convalescent home to recuperate; this would be closer to my mother and easier for me to visit.

Being back in Montreal gave me a good case of hemorrhoids, in other words, a pain in the ass. I called my naturopath in Idaho who told me my liver, the organ of anger, was rebelling, to stop eating and to drink quarts of grape juice mixed with distilled water and cream of tartar. The bleeding stopped immediately. I had to stay on this regime for three days. My father thought me crazy when I visited with my bottles of juice in my backpack. What level of anxiety was I under being back with my parents? My system shut down and I wasn't capable of processing my emotions to clear the way for some insight. I couldn't deal with it. No wonder I had moved and stayed away for so long. I needed time to think which I did during my walks between hospital visits to each parent, about five miles apart.

Nine beds. An orderly and a nurse transferred my helpless mother from a chair to the bed and I cried. I too was helpless. I looked at my forearms, then hers, parchment-like. Wrinkled and bruised. Sometimes sweet and disorientated. She talked of a little girl in a red velvet dress running around the room and said, agitated, that I wasn't perceptive because I didn't see her. "There she goes, can't you see her?" she asked impatiently, then silently withdrew while I watched her labored breathing and groping hands.

Across the aisle an old man groaned loudly. He seemed to be in terrible pain and very scared. The next bed held an attempted suicide and when two rude doctors asked why she had done it, she looked at them, stunned that her secret was exposed so callously. Then a woman in a four-car, head-on collision with a broken sternum, her makeup carefully applied before breakfast while others slept. The last bed, a small lady, too far away for me to see. On my mother's side, the bed to the left had changed occupants three times in the last three days. On her right, a Jewish mother whose daughter and son-in-law, what I had run away from fifteen years ago, had come from the States to be with her and her trembling heart. Two more beds changed occupants hourly. They all came and went but my mother was still here - long-term - very sad.

An elderly doctor, not hers, who visited every day after making his rounds, promised he would find a room upstairs. She brightened as he approached and took her hand in his, stroking her forehead with a warmth that I couldn't find in myself to give. She listened, following his every word with a smile and, starved for affection, grasped his hands as he was ready to leave. When he disappeared from the room, she sank back into the pillow, dissolving into her semi-conscious reveries. I moved to her bedside but she ignored my presence, her eyes open but not communicating.

"I want to go home," from a corner across the way. "You're not ready to go home. The Expos lost again last night. They're just a bunch of bums." The orderly was emptying bedpans and remaking beds. Patients were coming and going. Having walked to the hospital at 7:00 a.m. through quiet city streets, it was jarring to enter the pandemonium of this ongoing oppressive drama. Again the doctor promised, after I implored him, that he would find a room for my mother. I asked what it would take. He smiled and answered, "Patience." Not one of my attributes.

That evening after visiting my father I entered the emergency room to find a lady at my mother's bedside. We didn't recognize one another at first but as I approached her, I was shocked to see Beverly, an old friend of our family. She had worked for my parents for twenty-five years. While my mother slept we talked in the hallway, reminiscing and bringing one another up to date. She left and I stayed for a few more hours.

As I walked back to the apartment alone in the dark, I thought of Wyoming and how much I wanted to be home. With my parents approaching ninety, starting to get sick, I knew my life would change. I had a duty to perform and that was, first and foremost, to get my mother out of the emergency ward. Although she wasn't aware of the chaos around her, I was. The

next morning I was informed she would be moved by noon. Her bed was next to the window. There were three other women in the room: one with Alzheimer's who ranted incessantly, one with an amputated leg who screamed continuously, and another who was very quiet and sequestered.

When my mother slept I made my calls. I telephoned Ann Bloumer at the Jewish Family Service Centre, to whom I had written but never received an answer. She said she would look for my adoption in the Jewish agency, Baron de Hirsch, from which my parents had gotten me.

After feeding lunch to my mother I visited my father. He was more mobile and in better spirits, had both a favor to ask and something to tell me. He wanted to change his will to include another party and had the name of a lawyer who would come to the hospital with papers to sign. He needed two witnesses. Then he dropped the bomb. He confessed he had a girlfriend for the last forty-five years. Could I guess who? I was in shock. It was Beverly, who had been at my mother's bedside the previous evening. He asked if I thought my mother knew. My body was sitting in the chair, my eyes fixed on this stranger across the room, the distance between us so vast I couldn't focus. And what if she did know? I called Steve that night who, shocked at the revelation, immediately asked how I felt. I wasn't sure. He told me to hold it together and get home as quickly as possible, knowing I was denying the severity of the situation. Another betrayal, another rejection.

A wine bottle tossed on a lawn, a broken telephone cable around a tree, a squirrel with a bushy tail, a lady rushing for a bus, traffic, clouds. Where was my blue sky of Wyoming? My mother was on a bedpan when I entered and asked where I'd been. The Alzheimer's patient needed a bank and some money. The woman next to her yelled for her to shut up, asking what she would do if she had it. My mother smiled and mimicked them, amused. Lost souls all. My mother's eyes suddenly opened, searching. She saw me and smiled. Her trembling hand groped for mine. We held hands as she smiled at me, then drifted off again.

The next morning there was blue in the sky. My pace slowed, my mind lost a block and the hospital suddenly came into view before I was ready to see it. The nurse told me I didn't have to come so early but I was doing what I had come to do. The news on the TV said it was touchy in Iraq. There was trouble with politicians in Quebec. Burlington, Vermont city beaches were closed because of acid rain in the lakes. It was raining in the northwest. What was the weather like in Wyoming? Where the hell was Wyoming? Here nobody knows about Wyoming. A place only in my mind now.

"Why don't you fix your hair!" blurted my mother. I stared at her wondering why she was so mean. I knew there was a reason behind the criticism and it wasn't necessarily about me. Her unhappiness had pulled the corners of her mouth into a permanent scowl. My anger stirred but her vacant eyes kept me mute. She was old and the energy behind her dislike was less. It passed but settled in my heart as it had in the past.

"As far as I can remember, my relationship with my mother has been filled with conflict and acrimony. She was an angry, unhappy woman, and I was clearly not the daughter she

I finally heard from my mother's home nurse, who would be away longer than planned. I changed my plane reservations and continued to feed my mother the slop called hospital food despite her negativity and rude remarks. When I visited my father I had to listen to the orderly tell me how insensitive he was, never saying please or thank you like the other patients. I was drained and helpless, caught between their miserable situations.

Beverly called that night, distraught. "How could your father tell you? He's kept it a secret for so long; why now?" she blurted, humiliated. I was embarrassed for her. We hung up after I told her I didn't blame her and everything was fine. Why was I so ingratiating? Why had she pretended to be my mother's friend while screwing around with my father? I was angry at myself for not having told her how I really felt but I was barely functioning. And yet, in the far recesses of my mind, I understood. She and my father were better suited to one another. They fulfilled each other's needs. What about my mother's needs? She couldn't speak up and from her I had learned not to speak up either. Women believe in their hearts that men's needs come first, or so I had been indoctrinated.

She called again moments later. She wanted to hear me say something, implored me to punish her, pleaded with me trying to make it all go away, but I couldn't voice my opinion. There was nothing nice to say. Like a true adoptee I was more concerned with protecting her, and my feelings didn't count. I hadn't seen so much emotion from her in all the years I had known her, going all the way back to my earliest days. She had attended my birthday parties, engagement teas, luncheons, showers and the wedding. She was always there. Of course my mother knew. Why did she marry my father? She had been engaged to a man studying to be a doctor. He had been killed. My father, a lady's man, knew nothing about the arts and never read; she was on the rebound and ripe.

When my father was allowed out of the convalescent home for a few hours, he brought Beverly to visit my mother. Such arrogance, indifference and immaturity. I warned my mother that they were coming and she cried out, "Oh no!" She really didn't want to see her. Of course she knew. Maybe that was why she was so mean and, after confronting my father who kept denying his affairs, vented her anger on me. Why was I so ignorant? I didn't want to see it because it would have disturbed what little security I had. I tried to remember what had gone on in those early years. I did remember my father preaching honesty while he was leading a dishonest life. It set a difficult scene, this type of home life. Had I known then what I knew now, that when a person is so emphatic about something, he was talking about himself, how different might my growing up have been. He pushed honesty because he was basically a dishonest person and he projected this dishonesty on me. I recalled again his burning of my diary.

Hi regretted too many things: finding out that a father who taught me that honor was everything was not an honorable man." ¹⁴

The veil had parted and I finally saw who my father really was. Our relationship would never

be the same. Family secrets are devastating. I thought of my mother and how our relationship had suffered and wanted more than anything else to tell her I knew and was sorry about how things had turned out. My father had driven a gulf between my mother and me that was irreparable. She and I might have been friends if not for him and his pretentious lies. But he was my father and the connection between daughters and fathers is intangible.

My mother's doctor, when he finally showed up, refused to talk about her condition. All he wanted to hear about was the Tetons and fishing in the great American West. He was a pompous man with the worst bedside manner. After he left, my mother sarcastically told me to go back to Wyoming. I thought it was a good idea. I didn't feel as if I were deserting my father. After all, he had Beverly. I felt free to leave.

Thoughts of my mother disappeared as the plane rose above the clouds heading towards Boston's Logan Airport. A broken ceiling yielded glimpses of fall foliage - red, orange, gold and green. I had an hour and forty minute wait. Hot sun on my back through the airport's windows made me sleepy as I read, waiting for the Cincinnati flight. The U.S. customs agent hadn't confiscated my apples so I ate one to get the sticky residue off my teeth from the muffin I had indulged in over Vermont.

A muddy river, probably the Ohio, a low dense cloud of pollution, flat land. I gazed out in search of mountains while sipping a cold Coors. All I could see was a haze on the horizon and a patchwork below. Everybody ordered chicken when given a meal choice. Perhaps people were getting wise to the beef industry. I had forgotten to pre-order the vegetarian meal though that usually wasn't much better. Land O'Lakes Classic Blend (of what I wondered), no cholesterol, on a dry whole-wheat roll. I ate to pass the time and stretch the last pages of my book. The ride was getting rough and the seat belt sign flashed on. After another beer I didn't feel the bumps. Forty-five minutes east of Salt Lake City, the foothills came into view. Smog-defiled Denver, Rocky Mountain National Park, where tiny turquoise lakes filled craggy cirques. The Rockies stretched as far as the eye could see and of course clouds, or were they snowy peaks? It was hard to tell as we jostled along.

I finished my book just as the scenery got interesting. A bit of the Badlands and Dinosaur National Monument to the right, the Colorado River Valley to the left and finally Utah and the Green River, the same one with its headwaters in that high valley in the Winds. A line of clouds over the Wasatch Range where the sky was bluer and the haze brighter. I didn't usually see the Rockies from this perspective and they were impressive.

Eighty degrees in Salt Lake. We were starting the descent. Robert Redford's Sundance Resort - red scrub oak patches against taupe mountains - and the city's pollution sulked above the valley. We banked sharply over the Great Salt Lake. Everybody including the man at the ticket counter thought me lucky to live in Jack- son Hole. "I'd love to get up there someday," he'd remarked. Only a few people boarded the Jackson flight and we took off with no time to spare. The Wind Rivers on my right, the Hobacks on my left and the Tetons ahead. The valley stretched to the high plateau of Yellowstone and there was the tiny town I lived in at the foot of the Gros Ventres. My heart skipped a beat and my face flushed in expectation. The plane

veered sharply to the west and glided along the ramparts of the Tetons; the Grand, Middle and South Tetons, Wister, Buck and Static Peak slipped by as we came to a hard, abrupt stop at the edge of the short runway. After a long, excruciatingly painful eleven days, I was happy to be home again.

A CASH DEAL

Anne Bloumer, the lady I had called while visiting my mother in the hospital, wrote that she had searched her files and hadn't come up with anything regarding my adoption. I was shocked. My mother had told me I had been adopted from the Baron de Hirsch, an institute that housed two orphanages among other organizations. Upon the realization that my parents fitted into the mold described in all the adoption books I read, I knew I must accept the fact that they had lied to me about everything: my mother dying in childbirth, my father in the war, and having got- ten me when I was three days old with no papers except a birth certificate. I was awakening not only to the reality of being adopted and actually having another set of parents, but also to the fact that the life I had led until now was based on lies.

When I confronted my father on the phone, he retorted annoyingly that there was no agency involved, it had been a cash deal. He didn't remember if I was three days or three weeks old when they got me and what was the difference anyway? I was taken aback by his insensitivity. Dr. Rabinovitch, he continued, who had delivered me, had a small private clinic and catered to unwed mothers. There were no records. They had burned in a fire as had the hospital, and the doctor was dead, another routine lie reported in the books along with the mother's being killed in an automobile accident on the way to the hospital.

I recalled that he had once told me, during one of our infrequent, uncomfortable (awkward) talks about my adoption, that he paid \$50 for a doctor's visit to have his sperm implanted into his wife, my adoptive mother, and carried the jar under his armpit all the way, by streetcar, to the doctor's office to keep it warm. I found it strange that he remembered this incident, but couldn't recall how much he paid for me or how and when I arrived. There was nothing else to discuss, the subject was dropped, and we hung up.

"While believing themselves to be doing everything for their child's well-being, they are actually withholding from them the very knowledge they need for their development into healthy adults. This role eventually works against them, estranging them from the very children they want to hold close." ¹

I called Dr. R.'s son, also a doctor, who was not at all happy to hear from me. He became irate when I asked where the records were and said I should have called twenty years ago when his father was still alive. He wasn't any help and a slip of the tongue caught him unawares. He said his father had burned the files, immediately correcting his statement to "when the files were burned."

I was getting nowhere. There was nothing left to do but place an ad in the newspaper and hope this mythic mother of mine might see it.

Looking for birth parents, girl born October 27,1940, private hospital, Montreal, Quebec, private adoption, phone # or write direct.

After mailing an \$18 check to the Gazette, I felt uneasy, as if I were taking a step into a dark place, not knowing if my foot would hit the floor, desperately trying to see into the blackness. I didn't care what my parents would think if they knew what I was doing.

Nothing happened. Eleanor Bott sent me the ad and I put everything in a folder and filed it away. Every attempt brought hope and when there was failure, despair. Nothing was working and maybe I really didn't want to know badly enough. Did I need another family? My real mother might be worse than the one to whom I was accustomed.

Steve and I left for Canada at the beginning of October when the gold of autumn governed and any slight breeze sent leaves scattering, each worth collecting for a scrapbook. The undergrowth had thinned and walking through our meadows revealed the lay of the land. Suddenly one morning, the gold was gone and only dark green covered the landscape.

Susan had called my father's workplace and found that her grandparents had been in hospitals and that her mother had been in Montreal. She wrote that it hurt to read my letters saying we must break down the barriers when I didn't follow through by having the courage to call. She was working hard in therapy and maybe it was time for me to do the same. The blame and responsibility were equally mine. Had we chosen to live in the patterns of the past or could we create a new relationship based on mutual respect and understanding? She signed it, "Very sorry,

Susan." She and I hadn't seen one another for over five years and had never talked about what had happened that fateful summer she spent in Jackson when she had accused me of getting the fed after her father because the government had accused him of forgery. I firmly believed that in order to move forward and develop trust and respect, we had to deal with the past.

We returned to Wyoming and during that month my father called a lot even though there were strange feelings between us, which got stranger when, while talking to Steve, he complained about my mother, saying, "It's hard to fuck a ninety-year-old." Steve got nauseous and finally repeated the ugly remark to me. I wondered who this crude stranger was.

I received a letter from Valerie. In her twenty-eight years I had never forgotten her birthday. I didn't remember forgetting it this year. Something must have been going on between my two older daughters because they both felt the same about our relationship. They never asked about what I was doing, nor about Steve or Elizabeth, and were only concerned with telling me about themselves and what I was doing wrong. Neither girl had made an attempt to visit for a long time. She also thought about why she hadn't written sooner. I wondered if she would ever get to that part of the problem. It was all very sad to her. She wished I were more a part of her life; she felt I wasn't interested. At the end of the year she called and angrily accused me of not being her mother! Who knows what prompted that? I was tired of being blamed for everything that went on in their lives and decided to take care of my own.

Bush started the war against Iraq even though he knew the American people were utterly against it having had enough after Vietnam.

At the beginning of January we left for the far north. Back in Canada my search continued. Perhaps buying land in the country of my birth was an unconscious desire to open the search, and the piglets, the impetus, but what spurred me on and kept me going? When my mother had said she didn't want to read a book I had just published, I felt motherless and motivated. My father had read it twice. She provided me with another incentive when, in the hospital, she rudely told me to go back to Wyoming. When she called me "a thorn in her side," she made me realize that was probably what I had been to her most of her life. I remembered her reaction to Grand Teton National Park - "Can't they clean this place up?" referring to the fallen trees - and I felt a stirring inside. Who was this woman? I bet she's the only person in the world to feel this way in a place where I had hiked for the last fifteen years, a place that charged me with excitement. Her comment caused deep-seated emotions of hatred to surface.

You're becoming extroverted. That's the search. Your searching for your biological parents is a metaphor for you searching for your place. Do not get seduced into thinking that you have to find your parents. Be aware that you're just finding yourself. You need to know those parts of yourself.

Dr. Caplan, Holistic Optometrist

As long as I was doing something, whether it was reading books or sending letters, I felt I was dealing with my adoption. Even though I still didn't relate to being adopted, I wasn't denying it anymore. I continued to ask my father about my adoption and he continued to insist he knew nothing. The only clue might be in the two penciled notes I discovered on the back of my birth certificate that seemed to match my father's handwriting.

Norton, Vt. 11/24/44, 10 days, CLE (or C), No 694; Norton, Vt. 8/9/46, 2 wks, Co C

"Where do you connect with the human condition when you are chosen and every- one else is born?" ²

"For while the search promises to make us free, it also stirs up previously re- pressed material that has lain dormant until now." ³

"Although blood relationships may not be perfect they do not have to be explained." ⁴

My father called to tell me that he had gotten an infection in the hospital and was now back in the convalescent home to recuperate. The next day I flew to Montreal. Valerie was there on business and Susan along with her boyfriend came to spend time with me. That's where I saw her after six years and met Roger for the first time. When I hugged her and broke down in tears, she stiffened and asked why I was crying. I couldn't reply. My father said it was because

I hadn't seen her for so long, finding it strange that it had to be explained. She was unresponsive. When Valerie discovered her wallet missing, she called the hotel and was told the taxi driver who had driven her to the hospital had returned it. Her sister offered to drive her downtown to fetch it. So I was left with my father, sporting one of the two pairs of pajamas that Beverly had bought him, confirming the fact that she had already taken my mother's place, and Roger, two strange men of whom I knew almost nothing. I asked Roger if he really loved my daughter and my father thought I was being forward. He did, he said, and had for a long time. I found that to be strangely comforting. If she and I couldn't be close, at least she had somebody.

That night at my parents' apartment, my girls joined me on my parents' bed after Roger fell asleep, and we talked into the night. When I heard Susan was on the pill, I warned her of its insidious effects and her sister echoed my feelings. The next day Susan drove us to the outskirts of the city to see the Superdome, a grotesque debauchery. Valerie was bored but she thought it interesting and I was content to listen to my two daughters disagree. We stopped at Beauty's for breakfast, a hole in the wall where I used to buy penny candy when I went to public school. Because of the yuppie movement, many of these places were now chic and I felt uncomfortable. It was too crowded and noisy and because we had to sit at the counter, there was no way to talk. Nobody seemed to care, the significance of being there far outweighing the desire for communication. Being with my daughters made me wish we weren't so estranged. You can't go back and recapture what was and I saw that clearly. I was becoming another person due to my search, my alternative way of life, and the passage of time away from them.



After a successful joint exhibit of our artwork at a gallery in Jackson, Steve and I decided to return to our cabin in the Canadian wilderness.

In order to check our health we made an appointment with an iridologist. The irises indicate the level of constitutional strength, inherent weakness and the transitions that take place in a person's health according to the way one eats, drinks, feels, thinks and lives. This form of iris interpretation was used in ancient China as far back as 1000 B.C. To understand the character and constitution you have inherited is to know who you are and how to make the most of it. He photographed our eyes and suggested a cleanse. The intestines were the seat of all troubles and a thorough periodic cleansing, with seven days of juices and colonic, was in order. We were still young and it would be beneficial to take our health into our own hands. You can take so many supplements but they weren't much help if the pipes were blocked. Since my divorce my insides were clenched tight and the drugs in which I indulged - so toxic to the liver - hadn't helped.

The iridologist, seeing a black spot in my iris indicating the area of my right hip, said I was born with this defect. I was actually excited to hear about a congenital problem, something of my medical history of which I knew nothing. Thoughts and emotions play a role in the health of the skin. The skin feels the environment both physically and emotionally. When one has a

belief that the world is a harsh place, the skin becomes underactive as a channel of elimination. People who continually ignore their emotional needs pay the price physically. I knew I was holding on to resentment, which adversely affects the kidneys. A factor in kidney health is forgiveness. It is important to forgive in order to move forward.



Elizabeth was on the road today on her way to visit us, but she planned to stop in Nelson, B.C., an alternative town much like Mendocino, to see if she might want to live there. She was a Canadian who had never lived in Canada. We still didn't know if she was having a hard time leaving us or if I was having a hard time letting her go. Maybe a little of both, she said. The forecast for snow made me edgy.

We'd been apart for almost two months and although I wasn't lonesome, I was glad she was coming. I had been clutching at straws and it had taken all this time to unwind. Dealing with this adoption stuff was a struggle.

Finding nothing in Nelson, she thought she might try again later. With two more hands to help, we sided a section of the cabin and completed numerous jobs that made living the simple life more simple. After two weeks we returned to the U.S. and as we crossed the border, Elizabeth, who was driving her VW Bug behind us, was stopped. Her blue card had expired and a Canadian social insurance card in her wallet caused them to question the validity of her U.S. residency. I finally convinced them that we were innocent and she would get a new one immediately. Living in the U.S. for so long, she rarely used her card but with crossing the border so frequently, we were exposed to their rules. Fortunately, this was in 1991. I hate to think of the difficulties she would have faced in our post-nine-eleven world.

Driving through Montana was like being in a flotation tank - expansive views, bleached sky, velvet south-facing hills, ridged snowy northern slopes, hot noonday sun, heavy, sleepy eyelids. Winter was loosening its grasp. We stopped for gas in Deer Lodge, a prison town. You can't really help people by putting them behind bars. All they want to do is get out. What we need is the Russian equivalent of Siberia to get them out of civilization and let them fend for themselves. We reached the twenty-five-mile Monida Pass on the border of Idaho, where midwinter conditions were a matter of fact all year round. Having just missed a snowstorm and moments ahead of another, this was not a good time for a ride in the Rockies. A caramelized ridge east of the reservoir, a pass through fossilized rock ruins, farmland and volcanic debris, and the road heading west into Wyoming over Teton Pass.

The days passed slowly while we were on our cleanse, a spacey time with toxins on the move. My head ached, I was tired, I had to rest often. Gross stuff was released with each colonic and I wondered how I survived with such sludge in my system. My eyesight might improve, sinuses clear up and I might utilize more fully all the wonderful organic food I consume.

Valerie called to tell us that her father was moving west. She didn't sound happy. After she had moved across the country to get away from him, he was going to be too close for

comfort. The thought of my ex-husband coming west was wearisome, unwelcome and a warning of things to come.



Steve's estranged daughter was planning to visit with a friend and since Elizabeth and I didn't want to be around, we left for Canada for a few weeks of hiking and to look for an art school or college for her to attend. She would have found it difficult sharing Steve and he might be more relaxed being alone. In the twenty pounds of mail that had accumulated since our last trip, there was a circular for Festival '91 in Nelson featuring Joan Baez. The concert was three days away.

It had been cloudy. Rain might be a problem so we packed our ponchos, food and camping gear for an overnight stay and left Saturday morning for the six-hour drive to this small, historic "nuclear-free" town on the southern tip of Kootenay Lake. A garage attendant just outside Kokanee Glacier Park told us we could buy our tickets that evening instead of waiting until the day of the concert to which Elizabeth treated me. We stocked up on groceries at the co-op, retraced the miles to the backcountry cutoff and, ignoring the warning about grizzlies being out and about in the glacier area, drove the sixteen difficult kilometers up the winding, rocky canyon which took over an hour. After gathering wood for our tiny stove, we crawled into the camper and enjoyed a dinner of corn tortillas, tofu slices, salsa, diced onions and a large salad. The stove took the chill off the night air and we eventually fell asleep to the sound of rushing water and rain on the roof.

It was still raining in the early hours of the morning. We wondered if it would clear in time for the outdoor concert and worried about the condition of the road back to the highway below. Suddenly the rain stopped and we decided to take a hike before breakfast. A sign warned of a bear corridor through which we had to pass and reminded us to make noise, letting them know of our presence. Easy switchbacks for a mile and a half to impassable snow. We attempted to walk around the lake but again were stopped by heavy snow.

The fairgrounds on the banks of Kootenay Lake were bustling as we walked towards the main stage. Blankets, tarps, plastic squares and sleeping bags circled the foreground. Rushing back to the truck, we gathered our stuff and returned to find a grassy rectangle about fifteen feet in front of center stage. After stretching out our ponchos and securing the corners with rocks, we dropped onto the center of our site that we would guard for the next ten hours. Talk about territorial rights.

At 3:00 p.m. huge clouds collected around the Selkirk Peaks while the grounds were filling up. By 4:00 p.m. there were patches of blue in the sky. Elizabeth investigated the other bandstands while I stood guard and then we switched, giving us both a chance to look around. A natural food booth selling tofu ribs, cookies and squares with just a bit of sugar made us settle for our own fare. It was finally 5:00 p.m., food was everywhere and blankets extended beyond the rear bank of lights and speakers. At 7:30 the first singer, Sarah McLachlan, then unknown, appeared. She was loud and attendants handed out earplugs to the few rows up

front. Then a Brazilian band. The stage was finally cleared, instruments hauled off, floor swept and without warning, Joan was there, in jeans, sneakers, white turtleneck and black jacket. A few words to the controller, a glance at her accompanist, and she reached for her guitar. I can't remember her opening set because I was in shock. Gracias a la Vida, Diamonds and Rust, Amazing Grace - did we remember Woodstock 150 years ago - Forever Young, The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down, Railroad Boy, Gabe's Song, a few wonderful warm words to her dedicated fans about her politics and how different they were from Bob Hope's, who had performed the night before, and she was gone, all five and a half feet of her. She reappeared for one encore amidst shouts and clapping and the glorious evening was over.

We returned to the truck with our two torn tickets to find the headlights wouldn't turn on. The fuses were fine but the wire hung limply from one of the battery terminals. It was hard to handle earthly things after what we had been through, but we made the connection and drove to a small campground outside town, fired up the stove and ate something. It was midnight and we were too wired to sleep having just witnessed a phenomenon.

In the morning we headed north through the Slocan Valley, stopped in Nakusp, B.C., for a quick swim at the beach, bought some fresh lychees, vegetables and grapes, enough to keep us for a few days at the cabin, and talked all the way home about what Elizabeth wanted to do with her life. She was unsure whether to stay in Canada or move back to the States. We let it go for the time being. There were more important things to do, like hiking in the Canadian Rockies, which we had never done. After pouring over our maps, we decided on Lake O'Hara, which I had heard was one of the most beautiful areas with twenty-five lakes and some of the highest and most rugged mountains in the entire range.

Early the next morning we drove through Yoho National Park to the trailhead. About ten minutes in I froze and called to Elizabeth, just ahead of me. A black bear sow and two cubs stood in the path twenty feet in front of us. Transfixed, we watched as she whisked her babies up a tree and then trundled off to settle behind a large dead tree trunk. Growling softly she shifted her weight, prepared. We were paralyzed. She snorted at her cubs bouncing in the upper branches and keeping my eyes on her, I whispered to Elizabeth to start walking. We advanced, watching her carefully, passed and rounded a bend, looking back every few seconds to make sure she wasn't following us.

It was close to 4:00 p.m. when we dropped our packs at a small, groomed site, walked down to the communal area for water, and stored our food in the animal-proof shelter. This was a grizzly corridor and cleanliness was of utmost importance. We had been warned not to allow any rinse water to fall onto the rocks under the tap because odors accumulated. All this was new to us. Since we've been hiking we have always been on our own, bears or no bears. Here we were forced to hang out with humans.

Lake Oesa, our destination the next morning, was set in a high, desolate cirque on the backside of Lake Louise. We made our way along the shoreline trail, climbed the steep switchbacks to the top of a cliff, and continued up a succession of rocky plateaus to the lake, surrounded by high rock walls, frozen most of the year. We walked around the lake for a

glimpse of Abbot's Pass, the major alpine route between Lakes O'Hara and Louise, and the stone hut at the top of the steep couloir. The climb must be easier on the other side because nothing in the world would get me up this one.

In the afternoon we hiked to the other side of the valley towards McArthur Lake. As we proceeded through stands of larch along the trail that followed the edge of the cliffs, I got stuck on a steep, narrow ledge where a stone stairway started up the precipitous slope, and had to turn back. It didn't bother Elizabeth but two women behind us followed suit. We spent the rest of a hot afternoon in the meadows cooled by a silent breeze.

We decided to leave the next morning, buy some food in Field, a tiny town in Yoho National Park, and cross into the Yoho Valley for a few more days of hiking. After an endless eight-mile march we arrived at the store minutes before closing, bought what we could, and started on the fourteen-mile road to Yoho, the eighth wonder of the world with its compressed, stacked switchbacks where buses had to back up to negotiate the turns. In a parking area below the three-hundred-eighty-meter Takakkaw Falls, we parked, ate dinner and fell asleep to thundering water, lucky that no rangers came by because we didn't have a permit to camp there.

Heading into Yoho Valley the next morning, we passed numerous waterfalls for which this valley is known, and finally reached a high bank overlooking the upper reaches of the Yoho River where the glacier had receded far back into the canyon. We sat on the rocky slope and during lunch talked about the differences of hiking in Canada as opposed to the U.S. - fewer people, an older, more culturally diverse crowd, increased restrictions and lower altitudes. The sun felt good as we stared at the empty canyon once filled with ice. The greenhouse effect the government had denied for years was no doubt having an effect, shrinking the glaciers and drying up the land. Retracing our steps to the junction, we started an endless ascent to the chalet at the foot of the eighty-meter Twin Falls, two massive waterfalls which split just before plunging over the cliff. A couple were nice enough to lend us a few dollars for a pot of tea to accompany our cookies which we ate on the porch of the rustic log building. Continuing on we descended into the depths of the valley of miniature clay terraces and crusty rocks, got some money from our truck, and walked back the one kilometer to the campground to repay the couple; they were genuinely surprised to see us.

From Field we called Steve to let him know we were out of the mountains and asked about his visit with his daughter. She had stayed for two days and he'd tell us about it when we got home. I knew sharing him was difficult for Elizabeth because she had been grinding her teeth during the night. We had walked ourselves ragged and were ready to close the cabin and head back to Wyoming.

"An emotion can be numbed by tensing muscles, grinding jaws, holding one's breath. Shallow breathing is a common way to avoid emotional pain." ⁵



The 18th of July was the first cold night; the heat of summer was waning. My father called, very upset, and told me the strangest thing. "I married your mother again tonight," he uttered dubiously. She had been throwing her wedding ring on the floor. It seemed quite obvious to me what was going on. Her conscious mind had rotted away, leaving the subconscious in control, and everything stored for so many years was surfacing. Had she been able to express her feelings, she might not have gotten ill. The hatred in her heart was finally seeing some light, confusing my father. She had always known about Beverly.

Steve, Elizabeth and I went to Canada in September. By mid-October the creek was partly frozen and we had to dig through the ice to get water. My father called our neighbor to tell me that my mother, after a long wait, had been transferred to the Hospital of Hope, where the ill and aged went to die. He hoped she wouldn't realize where she was because her father had died there. As she was getting close to the end, I felt a trip east was in order.

At the beginning of November Elizabeth and I left on a Greyhound Bus for Calgary, and caught a flight the next morning to Montreal. I was going to see my mother and she, her grandmother, for the last time. My father met us at the airport.

All he did was brag about his new coat, made by the manufacturer for whom my ex-husband used to work. He complained about not being able to get it wholesale anymore. What was at the bottom of this spitefulness? He certainly wasn't as warm and welcoming as he used to be.

We stayed at his apartment and the next day took the subway to see my mother. She looked shrunken in her wheelchair and didn't know us at all. Elizabeth patiently and lovingly fed her lunch, conscious of my incapacitation. Sometimes I just couldn't do what I should for my mother and I was grateful that my daughter was with me.

"I resented this woman who was my mother by a fluke of fate and a legal decree, but a primitive love still held me to her. Or was it guilt? Or gratitude? The Japanese speak of the debt that can never be paid: that's what held me to this mother - a child's helplessness and this debt. Or are they one and the same? Does it hold all adults to the parents they have grown away from - or only the adopted?" ⁶

After lunch Elizabeth played the piano in the recreation room, bringing some warmth to the wasted. I tried to get my mother's attention but she was mumbling almost unintelligibly about not trusting men. The gates were unlocked, the draw-bridge down and under the guise of senility, unuttered truths came forth. I told her I knew about Beverly and that it was all right to speak about it because now I understood why she was so irritable all those years and took it out on me, why we could never establish a relationship. She smiled blankly and I realized it was too late. Men and distrust; that was all that was left of a creative, intelligent mind abused by a lifetime of denial. It was no bargain living with my father while Beverly gradually took over, her way becoming his and mine if I allowed it. She had hung around for decades, waiting for the tidbits my father threw her way, and now with my mother out of the way, she was driving an ever greater wedge between him and his family. Ironically, I was happy he had a friend. As an only child, I had worried all my life about being around to care for my parents in old

age. I felt relieved. Beverly was there.

When my father strutted in hours later, he casually dumped his coat on a chair and walked around to the other patients never once acknowledging my mother. He eventually sat down at our table and said something that made my blood curdle. Had I not left my kids, they wouldn't be like they were now. I couldn't answer and angrily left the room, then broke down in tears. When Elizabeth came after me, I told her I was leaving; she said we should inform my father. I stormed away not caring one way or another.

We rode the subway in silence. I was too angry to talk and it was comforting to have her next to me. We tried to figure out where to stay, since I would not stay under my father's roof, called a few hotels but found them too expensive, and finally decided to phone my mother's nurse, who I knew lived across the street. I couldn't remember her last name so we rushed from one building to another, searching the registries in the foyers. We finally located her and her phone number and called to see if she could suggest a place. She invited us to stay with her. I knew she would understand. We hurriedly packed our clothes along with all the organic food we had just bought, and dragging our baggage between us, rushed to get out before my father returned. We must have been quite a sight crossing the street with our stuffed bags overflowing. She welcomed us and listened regretfully to the events that had brought us to her door. She wanted to know if he had been like this while I was growing up. People don't change. Everybody knew about my father and Beverly and had for a long time. She didn't like my father and told us a lot about him we had never known. We went to bed early after a long, very upsetting day.

The next morning after my father left for work, we returned to the apartment and while I was in the shower, he called. Elizabeth asked me if I wanted to talk to him. I dutifully felt I had to and the fiercest fight ensued. My daughter sat on the couch watching me yell at my father, frightened that I was going off the deep end. I just let everything out that had been stored for years. He said he didn't know where we had gone and worried about us all night. How could I do such a thing? He cried. Then I cried. The anger rose and spilled over. I was mad at him, jealous of Beverly and hated him for being such a cruel man. After being on the phone for over half an hour, we left for the hospital. As I opened the apartment door, the neighbor across the hall peeked out. I was embarrassed and apologized for all the shouting. She was very understanding and told us she had just had a terrible fight with her mother.

Elizabeth had never seen Montreal and places where I used to hang out in my university days. We got off the subway at the Montreal Museum to see an exhibit, then walked along Sherbrooke Street towards McGill University. I pointed out the Student Union where I had spent most of my free time and the restaurant where I had first glimpsed Leonard Cohen.

We arrived at the hospital in time for my mother's lunch - how could anyone exist on such food? Suddenly Susan appeared. She had heard we were in town. Roger met us for lunch at Schwartz's Delicatessen and for the first time since I was a child, I ordered a cold combination on rye, cole slaw and a dill pickle. They treated us and when Elizabeth thanked her sister with a kiss, Susan snidely remarked that that's what she got for having treated her

sister. Elizabeth didn't feel good about the remark, nor did I. But my estranged middle daughter, insinuating that you have to pay to get some affection, has equated money with love for so long she believed the two to be synonymous. We strolled along the streets of my childhood, took my photo in front of my old house, and walked along Esplanade where Dr. R.'s clinic had been located. Susan and Roger dropped us at the subway and left. They appeared to be well-suited, living in a land of labels, identifying life with advertising hype, and seemed concerned only about themselves. Still, it was fun to have the few hours we did together in spite of how different my life had become.

We arrived at the apartment to find my father angry at us for being gone so long. Even though I was with my daughter whom I hadn't seen in years, he couldn't let it go. Is this what my mother and I had to put up with when he didn't get his way? Was he as impossible then as he was now? Or had he changed so drastically because of the woman he was now with? Had I been blind all my life?

He complained about a pain in his chest and said he had to lie on the floor, waiting for me to return. I asked why he hadn't called Beverly, or gone to the hospital himself? What did he do when I wasn't in town? I drove him to the emergency room while Elizabeth stayed at the apartment. He seemed fine while we waited for hours and finally I left him and returned home. Later that evening he returned. There was nothing wrong.

That evening Elizabeth met Beverly for the first time and took an immediate dislike to her, finding her hard and aggressive. After nine days we returned to Calgary and took the bus back to British Columbia where Steve met us. Four days later we left for Wyoming.

✎ 1992 ✎

Bill Clinton was elected president. He promised to reduce the military budget of \$262 billion. But after two years of his presidency he recommended more money for the military.

I wrote a letter to my father since I couldn't maintain my composure while talking to him.

Dear Dad,

I guess it's time I wrote you a letter to get some things off my mind because I can't seem to talk to you on the phone. First, I think having a good friend like Beverly is wonderful for you. After you told her you admitted your affair to me, she was angry and embarrassed. I was probably just as angry but relieved in a strange way that you weren't alone. All I could do at the time was feel happy for you but I am having difficulty adjusting. I found you very insensitive with Ma in the hospital. Susan, along with everybody else, was upset by you telling everyone about your girlfriend. The only person who wasn't bothered was you.

I know why you told me about Beverly, but in so doing you have tampered with deep feelings of mine. It's hard for me to think of her as a replacement for my mother when you call and expect me to speak to her. Ma is alive. She's my mother and I think about her all the time and how she lived through all this. For you to think she knew nothing is a bit far-fetched. Ma has always

talked about you and your girlfriends but I never paid attention. Nobody could say anything wrong about you to me.

My problem is not with Beverly, it's with you. You could have been more discreet about your affair for my mother's sake. You talk too much. You think she never heard you speaking to her on your bedroom telephone every night? You don't seem to give us women much weight. And I thought you were special.

I had lived in the darkness of my parents' secrets all my life. I took care of my husband and children as my father had done with his wife and daughter. However, blended with the environment of my adoptive family were genes from my biological parents which resulted in a muddled message. I did what my parents did as well as what my roots forced me to do. My discrepancy ended in divorce while my father's was more traditional to his time. They unhappily stuck it out, living in denial and nonfulfillment.

As my mother became increasingly ill, my father spent more time under Beverly's influence. I could hear it in his voice when we spoke. Where he used to listen to what I had to say, now he was skeptical of me, taking everybody else's side.



I finally dropped my ex's surname, hoping to leave the last of my marriage behind.



Dear Mom,

My life is changing. Getting married and gone to Maui. Back middle of May. I love you, Valerie.

"Would you kindly read that again," I asked the operator, shocked. It was one of those phone messages where an operator calls and reads a telegram rather than sending a written copy.

After hearing the message repeated, I asked her to send the telegram so I could be sure of what it said. Was she already married and gone to Maui or was she getting married and going to Maui? I was confused and had to get over the fact that she didn't want to talk to me. After two days of worrying and wondering, I called her to find that she wasn't married yet and hadn't gone to Maui. Suddenly our lives fell apart, again. She couldn't ask me to her wedding because her father was invited. I said many unforgivable things but this latest rejection of hers blinded me. I was hopelessly lost. It wasn't her anymore but my mother and I screaming at one another, fighting over a father figure. She said she didn't think I would come. "You didn't give me a choice," I answered furiously. I hung up on her as my mother had always done to me. Except I called her back, but in the heat of passion dialed Susan's number who wasn't pleased when I asked for Valerie. Too anxious to be apologetic, I mumbled something, hung up and tried again, this time getting Valerie. I was hurting beyond pain. Not capable of making up her own mind, she had asked her boyfriend's advice, and he shrugged it off telling her not to invite me. His answer confirmed her feelings and now she wasn't forced

into a decision on her own.

Valerie has a real fear of rejection, which triggers it in you. When her father was putting you down, he was putting down the girls as well. But the oldest got the brunt of it. He's a very powerful being but he's out of control and doesn't take responsibility for it. And she was at an age where she was vulnerable to that. Somehow he made her feel that you were wrong and in being wrong it made her wrong. She needs to start having faith in herself. Susan got sent away and learned to be very independent. Elizabeth's not afraid to say what's on her mind. The two older ones feel a resentment towards her because she was with you. Valerie feels pulled between the two of you and that's a very difficult position to be in. Beneath it is real resentment. She still has stuff to work out with her dad. That's why she's picked a relationship with someone who's similar to him. In many ways she's very much like you. And that's really a good way to get your buttons pushed. She always turns to you for advice. Then you're damned if you do and damned if you don't. Say to her, "You have to look inside yourself and feel what's right." Then her father can't say anything and put down what you say to her.

Psychic reading, Joy, Mendocino, 1985

My ex called and surreptitiously said Valerie was terrible not to have invited me to her wedding and then he did. He even invited Steve and me to stay in his apartment. He had an extra room. I was stymied for an answer, so preposterous was his suggestion. He continued to talk about the rotten kids we had as if we were friends conspiring against our children. I said a few things I wanted but he was a sharp talker and I listened instead of telling him to drop dead. The phone call was a good indication of what I had been up against most of my life and a reminder of what few changes I had made, still afraid to speak my mind. I resented him for his pretense of caring, his supercilious demeanor and his fake concern about my health. Earlier that day Steve had predicted the call. So Valerie and I weren't friends anymore.

Your ex-husband is very different from Steve, almost the opposite. He's a charmer, warm and likeable, very effusive, outgoing and laughs a lot. There's a bit of anger in there too, but he really knows how to deal with people very well. There is however in him a lack of substance, a lack of self-esteem. That's one thing that both Steve and he have in common but they deal with it very differently. With this man there isn't the character, strength or intelligence that Steve has. This man needs constant reinforcement from people that he's likeable and wonderful. He seems like a nice man here. I think that there must have been times when he was not so nice.

Psychic reading, 1983, by Mitra

It was a perfect description of my father and most women don't like to admit we marry our fathers. However, my real father's vibes were in me too, and I had to deal with my birth father's DNA as well.

Part of what you were dealing with in that relationship is feeling responsible and taking

responsibility for him and his level of consciousness rather than just accepting him for what he was. And when you try to change people like that, it is not an act of love. It's an act of rejection. The more you try to change them, the more rejected they feel and the more they resist you. The message they get is you're not accepting me the way I am.

Psychic reading, 1983, by Mitra

It was a relief to receive Elizabeth's Mother's Day poem in the midst of this rejection and negation.

*The dream you had
I think of often
I had one too
right after you.
I was with a guy
and then saw you
our eyes, they met
you said..."a game is it...
is that how you play?"
I turned my gaze
and thought a moment
then looked at you
"yes, it is."*

*I saw the blue
of your iris round
an electric moment
of truth unwound.*

*Some things in you
I see and feel
and get upset
when each is met
in me
especially
those I do not know.*

A few months after Valerie's wedding her husband wrote me a letter. He said she was afraid she had lost me. She was terrified of her father who hadn't helped matters by choosing the same city to reside in but he had never been invited to their place and there was "big tension" between them all.

If she didn't want to lose her mother, she was doing everything in her power to do just that. I

was angry at him for writing the letter. His tone sounded like he was blaming me for something. I realized he was taking his wife's part but his knowledge of the circumstances was so limited, he didn't sound friendly. And to top it all off, I had found out that she had borrowed \$20,000 from my father, behind my back, and then didn't invite me or my family to her wedding.



The First Lady of Wyoming called from Jackson and wanted to visit. Both she and her husband, the governor, had been fans of our work for years and I wondered what this was all about. Steve was in bed with the gout and I hastily tidied up the living room. We had tea and talked about adoption, of all things. I must have told her I was adopted when they had visited our gallery and because her youngest daughter was also adopted; she just wanted to talk. We both cried and continued the conversation even though she knew she was keeping her husband waiting. After he called to check up on her she left with a promise of an invitation to the Governor's Mansion. She said she'd call and let us know a good time, when nobody else was going to be there - just a quiet weekend at the Governor's Mansion.

A VISIT TO THE GOVERNOR'S MANSION

Mike and Jane Sullivan had been fans of our artwork before he became governor of Wyoming. I told Jane when she extended the invitation that we didn't have appropriate clothes for a formal visit and because of our diet had difficulty eating out. That didn't faze her. This was going to be an informal weekend, no dignitaries, nobody but us.

We arrived at the Governor's Mansion in late afternoon, and after giving our name at the gate, the guard waved us through. They were at the door waiting for us. After a tour of the premises we sat down to dinner with them, their daughter and her new husband. Mike delivered a prayer with just the right amount of humor so as not to offend anybody while we all held hands around the table. The salad had been picked from Jane's garden, sopapillas made by her cook, who had been given the weekend off, and red wine. After dinner Mike couldn't wait to chauffeur us over to the rodeo grounds for Steve to see his cowboy T-shirts being sold in a booth run by the company handling them. The Cheyenne Rodeo was in full swing and it was revealing to walk around with the governor, without his protective detail, and watch how people related to him. "Hi, Mike ... Hi, Governor," all very friendly, accustomed to seeing their head man mix with the masses. A drunk cowboy unexpectedly spilled some beer on Jane as he careened by, unapologetic. Jane graciously overlooked it while Mike continued to please the passers by. A little reality thrown in for good measure.

After Mike and Jane retired to their bedroom and Steve to ours, her daughter and I were left in the kitchen talking about our pasts. For the first time I was in the presence of another adoptee, alone, so we could say what we wanted. It was fun sitting on the countertop, late at night, talking about something we both never got to talk about so easily. This might have been part of the reason for Jane's invitation.

Suddenly Jane appeared in the doorway in her nightgown wanting to hear what we were discussing. When she asked if she was intruding, I told her that while it might be more difficult to talk in her presence, adoptive moms needed to know. The fact that I had no information about the circumstances surrounding my own birth surprised her, and she suggested that there might be a way to find out some- thing through political channels. We finally hugged and parted for our respective rooms.

Our bedroom was exquisitely decorated with indigenous items from the state; books by Wyoming authors, rocks and geodes from the surrounding strata, tiny baskets and bowls handcrafted by Native Americans and flowers, both fresh and dried. The linen was silken and soft, the towels and bath mat thick and luxuriant, beautifully embroidered with the Wyoming state seal, and all toiletries to cover our every need. I walked around the room unable to sleep. It was all so remarkable and regal. The curtained full-length windows opened to a well-groomed garden and lawn, treed for privacy, and even though we were in the middle of the city, one experienced a calm, country feeling.

We left after a casual breakfast. As we crossed the middle of the state, so unlike driving I-80, the sun came out over the Platte country. Low buttes and high storm arches sizzled with lightning all the way to the Wind Rivers. We had a lot to discuss on our way home.



The beginning of September had been overcast for days. It was too late in the season to postpone our trip in the Winds, a new area, the Scab Creek entrance, the second lowest in the range and one of the most strenuous. The sun was shining as we stopped in Pinedale for a trowel and two pounds of Jonathan apples, the first of the season.

It was cool at 11:30 a.m. when Elizabeth and I started up the steep hillside and continued to climb the three laborious miles to Toboggan Lakes. At Little Divide Lake under a few clouds, we lunched on a log, our legs dangling weightlessly. Past Lightning Lakes summer changed to fall and sweatpants replaced our shorts. I've never hiked the Winds in June or September when there wasn't snow.

Just beyond the lakes the mountains came into view and finally the south fork of Boulder Creek where a rough wooden sign pointed to Dream Lake. It had been a long day and I understood why this was not a popular trail.

Elizabeth quickly found a spot and our tent went up before the first raindrops appeared. After dinner and washing up, we collected twigs for a fire and made our way back to the tent in the dark. It was too beautiful to sleep so we built a fire to keep warm, sat on a rock and stared at the peaks. Far across the lake we could see the flicker of another fire through the trees. It was after 10:00 p.m. when the wind picked up and turned cold. After smothering the fire we climbed into our down bags and, through the tent opening, watched the embers glow. While talking, I could hear Elizabeth's even breathing and realized she had fallen asleep. At these times I could see her as a little girl with no cares in the world, no bears in her thoughts, no sisters on her mind. Warm, quiet, comfortable and still, just as I liked it to be.

It was light at 7:00 a.m., the sky, blue, and clouds hung around the peaks. No stiff muscles. Amazing! We explored the Dream Lake environs, walked towards Bonneville Basin but decided we needed a whole day to do it justice and returned to the tent for lunch. With our down jackets and books, we made our way to a narrow sandy beach we had passed on our morning stroll, and read while a beaver floated about. Suddenly a distant sound disturbed the silence. This was sheep-grazing country and there they came, swarming over the far slope with two cowboys alongside.

The soporific sound of sheep droned in the distance while we enjoyed macaroni and cheese under a secure, cerulean sky with a few cloud shadows crossing distant peaks, dissolving and leaving clear blue. We built a fire, the only way to stay outside in the cold, and watched the firmament fill with starry galaxies. A hooting owl during the night came closer until it sounded as if it were right outside the tent and then receded gradually into the distance.

Our third day began with too much oatmeal which we ate anyway. While washing our dishes at the creek we met Sybil from Salt Lake wandering around looking for the trail sign. She had been in the northern Winds for eight weeks and had left her partner two days ago with their tent and most of their food. It was because of his temper, she said. She was happy to meet some women on the trail. The men she met wanted only to pamper her and treat her like a woman. She wanted to hitch a ride to Salt Lake and we told her that she would have the best chance out of Big Sandy.

It was warm with scattered clouds as we passed Sand point Lake and began the four miles to the massive Middle Fork. The moleskin on my heel blisters bothered me so we stopped and as I pulled it off, to my horror, my skin stuck to it. Never having had blisters before on a hike, I gazed at the gaping red holes, thinking about the miles ahead. Elizabeth cut a bagel shape out of thick moleskin and strapped it over the holes with a Band-Aid. It worked.

Clouds were building at our backs as we climbed the 11,200' divide surrounded by Mt. St. Michel, Dragonhead and Pronghorn Peaks. A flash of lightning and my concern became conscious. We changed to warmer clothing and gloves as we descended the narrowing valley among yellow buttercups and purple fleabane, and finally our ponchos under a light rain. Dove-colored clouds hid the hilltops. Elizabeth lowered our wet food bags and we fell into the tent, happy to be off our feet. The rain stopped. We feasted on couscous and lentil-vegetable curry and after washing our dishes by the creek, hung our food, built a fire and sat close, drinking hot peppermint tea. We heard voices across the creek as a tent went up and we smelled their burning dinner. We weren't alone any longer. An elk bugled in the stillness. It started to rain again and continued all night.

The next morning it was still raining. I was fine until I saw the snow - huge white flakes, exciting at first, except the trail was getting covered very quickly. We discussed the possibility of having to walk out and the hazards of staying when a call from the direction of the trail pierced the silence. Some hikers approached to see if anybody was home. They weren't taking any chances. It might get soaked in for days. We decided to wait until noon and then, if necessary, we could still make the ten-mile walk out.

The people who had arrived last night left. Some hikers from Bonneville Basin left. Elizabeth didn't want to leave. Neither did I. After carrying all that food up that bloody trail and now, drag it out again? We dozed while the tent sagged, heavy with snow. When I looked out again I couldn't see more than a few feet around us. I deluded myself into thinking there could be blue skies over the ridge but reluctantly came to the realization that it would be best to leave. We packed up and slogged our way out of the mountains. It was early evening when we got to our VW Bug, wet and tired. The sky was dark and the mountains were still under heavy charcoal clouds. The car stalled and I pushed while Elizabeth steered and got it started again. At the main highway a man in a pickup helped get the car rolling. After stopping for gas in Pinedale, we had to push our way out of the station and at the light in Jackson two kids helped us get started again.

During October I heard from Susan and Valerie, who had a lot more to say. We hadn't spoken for six months and she was sorry she may have gone about things wrong, i.e., her wedding. She wanted to stay in touch and was at a loss as to what to do. She asked that I have the courtesy to respond.

I couldn't pretend everything was fine. I needed to disengage from my two older daughters. They were unable to face the reality of our situation and I didn't have the energy to keep defending myself. We were distant and getting more so. They couldn't keep ignoring us and expect me to always be at their beck and call.

Elizabeth's birthday poem to me:

*You know, we are so much alike
we have nothing left from what was
I'm just a kid and get impatient
I think I know more*

*You know, I see grandma in your expression
when you get tired or upset
Both of us have such problems with girlfriends
It's amazing we have each other*

*You know, when I look at you
You are so beautiful
Petite and long hair, a ballerina
in a walk of life*

*You know, my favorite line in the book we wrote
... our energies mix and between us
a positive force is created ...*

*You know, I love you so much
even when I'm contrary
and even more when I'm funny
even when I hurt and don't want to
hear anything objective
and even more when the walls crumble
and I cry and you listen
and feel for me even more than I feel then
And it's a calling
as clear as an owl's hoot in the dusk
to have a relationship like ours ... you know ...*

I do know ... as tears sting my eyes and a warm feeling spreads through my body. She's

knows me well. I am a lucky woman.

Steve was called to do some work in Colorado so we packed all our gear and headed south to Arches National Park, Edward Abbey country. I wanted to see his trailer and walk through the red rock realm he loved. Without nearly enough time to do this vast area justice, we continued to Boulder where we found a motel with a housekeeping unit and settled in.

Valerie called to tell me my mother was sick. I called my father who said she was still holding on. We agreed not to put her on a support system. She died on the morning of January 18th. I shed some tears but had a feeling of relief that her long haul of hanging on to her unhappy life was over. She had been in the hospital for over a year, oblivious to the world. I made reservations for a hotel in Montreal because I didn't want to deal with my dad, and Elizabeth and I left for the east.

This time there were no hemorrhoids. My father was upset that we didn't stay with him but my two older daughters did and I made the excuse that there wasn't enough room. At the funeral parlor before the service, we were asked if we wanted to see her one last time. My father refused but I needed to see my mother; along with my reluctant daughters, we all looked closely into the coffin. There she was, as if alive, but with a relaxed, leathery look, and she couldn't criticize me anymore. The rabbi talked about my mother as if he had known her for years - he had asked about her the night before when we met at my father's apartment - and kept repeating himself because there wasn't much to say. With one arm around my father's shoulders and the other around Elizabeth's, I felt removed and dispassionate. Everybody cried except me. In the funeral parlor's limo we followed the hearse to the cemetery. I had often watched these long black shiny automobiles filled with grief, wondering what it would be like to be on the inside; I found it quite comfortable, spacious and totally insulated from the world outside. I don't remember walking to the burial site. The surrounding gravestones stood like sentinels in the cold grey atmosphere, and the silence was symbolic of a pervasive feeling of death. Standing on the hardened mud beside a deep, dark hole, it was Valerie's hand I felt on my shoulder, the first sign of warmth in a long time. Elizabeth was always at my side and Susan had built a wall between us and around herself. It was desperately cold, the kind of dampness that chilled you to the bone, and while the coffin was being lowered, my body shook uncontrollably. I remember shaking like that after giving birth to Valerie. I also shook when my ex phoned long distance and I, intimidated, listened to him condemn me for leaving. In one of the books I read about birth mothers, that same kind of shaking came up.

"When Mark was born I shook so uncontrollably that I could not hold him. There may have been medical reasons for that, but I've never heard of another mother having that problem." ¹

My body responded on a primal level to loss and as the box hit bottom, my adoptive mother blended into my real mother, lost to me at birth, and the trauma magnified and materialized in my body, shaking it into an emotional release. It was just too much for me and had to get out somehow. I couldn't cry. I wasn't sad. I was torn apart.

"There's a symbiotic relationship between a mother and daughter, adopted or not. A bond between you and the one who raises you, who shares your history." ²

It had all happened too fast, and had it not been for the frigid temperature and the unconscious compulsion of wanting to get graveside incidents over with, I would have stayed longer. I had unfinished business with my mother. I wanted to tell her that I too was having a difficult time with my daughters, that I felt she must have loved me a little in spite of such adverse circumstances and had tried to be my mother.

We settled into a week of sitting shiva, mourning Jewish-style, at the apartment. The rabbi visited that evening and I learned that he had an adopted son. Because my birth certificate said I had been baptized, he offered to try to find out if I was registered with the Catholic Church since he had a friend there. My father, in his pseudo-supportive way, said he was sorry he couldn't help but he just didn't know anything.

I was surprised that after just two days he gave up sitting on the miniature metal folding chairs rented from the funeral parlor, complaining they were too uncomfortable. Mourning wasn't about comfort and if he wasn't in the mood to mourn, I certainly wasn't going to do what I had been doing just to please him. I decided to check out a few things I could do more easily being here in the city. Susan wanted to come but changed her mind when her two sisters decided to join us. Stubborn and resentful. She wanted me all to herself or not at all.

We visited the synagogue where I was registered at birth to see if anything more, besides what I already knew, was in their records. They had misplaced the book from the 1940's and there was nothing they could do. We went to the Supreme Court to check my birth certificate but the copy handed to me was the same as the one I had. There were no papers, names, dates or clues to research. It had all been immaculately taken care of, whatever "it" was.

My mother was gone. My father had a girlfriend and I didn't feel the need to stick around. The last morning together, Valerie and Susan made plans to lunch with their grandmother and aunt whom they could see anytime. I felt rejected that they didn't want to spend our last hours together. They hadn't returned by the time we had to leave so Elizabeth called a cab. We said goodbye to my father who, reneging on his previous offer, made to get us there for the funeral, coldly announced that he didn't think it necessary to help with our airfare or taxi.

Since my mother had been indisposed the last few years, my father had changed dramatically. Any closeness between us was gone and he was often critical, even nasty over the phone, making fun of my lifestyle and how I ate. "Slimy" was the adjective a psychic had used to describe him and I was beginning to understand why she had chosen that term. My mother was dead. How did I feel? Relieved. Our lives had passed in anger and misunderstanding. It would take years to find forgiveness, to realize who she was, her life struggles, her unfulfilled motherhood, her dependency on a man who shared his life with another woman, and to come to terms with the tense, unremitting relationship she had with me, her adopted daughter who mistakenly thought her father could do no wrong.



Steve and I said goodbye to the few friends we had made in Boulder and left for Wyoming. An invitation to Susan's wedding with a note saying she knew I wouldn't come awaited us when we arrived home. Two days later my father called and yelled at me because I wasn't going. He was footing the bill and what would it look like if I weren't there. He should have talked to me first and let her father pay for his daughter's wedding. But he had to show what a big man he was. She had invited old friends of her father's and mine whom she never saw anymore and who had taken sides in the divorce. Had she planned a small affair, I might have gone, but she needed to fill a gaping hole and didn't consider the consequences.

We left for Oregon to visit friends, and then continued on to Canada. It was all there as we had left it - the cabin, secure and well-stocked, the woodpile, stacked and dry, the creek, reliable and running high. It had flooded the bottom stairs Elizabeth had built down to the marsh. We settled in and spent some quiet days walking our land, grounding to the earth and revitalizing. After being clear blue and summer warm, the tops of the mountains were lost in mist and by mid-morning it was raining and wonderful.

Valerie wrote that her husband wasn't going to the wedding and she hoped Elizabeth and I would meet her so that we could all show up together. She realized I was angry at her and her sister and hoped the grudge wouldn't go on forever.

My feelings of frustration and helplessness about being absent from my middle daughter's wedding were emotionally unbearable and finally made me physically ill. I had always thought I would give my daughters their weddings; not being there had never entered my mind. You can't plan on anything. Life has a way of taking its own course.

The summer solstice: rain, warm sake, candlelight, coral and crimson paint- brush, yellow calypsos on the marsh. At the end of June we left for Wyoming to find the greenhouse I planted before leaving in full bloom, thanks to our neighbor.

An exciting gift of greens, reds, yellows and oranges - radishes, spinach, mustard greens with tiny yellow flowers, orach, Chinese greens, baby carrot tops, curled parsley, miniature marigolds, hanging baskets of herbs, and cascading multicolored nasturtiums over the raised beds.

On Susan's wedding day Steve and I drove up Shadow Mountain for a picnic and a spectacular view of the Tetons. The frailty of human relationships was dwarfed by an imposing landscape and my weakness in dealing with my daughters felt less oppressive. I had ordered a bouquet of wildflowers to be sent to Susan and a rose for her husband. The day passed as any other and was over before I knew it. My absence, forgotten in the festivities, would be filed forever in unforgiving hearts. Nobody would ever understand why I couldn't attend, least of all my father, my daughter and her new husband. I didn't really care what anybody else thought.

A week later Elizabeth, Steve and I hiked to Grizzly Lake in the Gros Ventres. The Tetons were crowded while this range behind our cabin was deserted. Two hawks soared overhead and in a cleft to the west we could see the Teton peaks. The ridged, sandy, red hills blended into rust and ochre shadows under a passing cloud. A woodpecker hammered away in a poplar. A mama and four baby ducks flitted in the pond as we descended through tall grass under scattered clouds sailing above. By the time we reached the lake the clouds simply floated overhead. The only way I knew the wind had picked up was the stirring of the grasses, flowers and sagebrush on the hillock ahead; otherwise it was calm. Two trumpeter swans and their five babies cruised to the other side of the lake as we settled on a log for lunch. Green and silver ripples, marshy areas, deep blue water, sandy edges, weeds and fringed gentian. On our way back I saw my first evening primrose, white and yellow against green. Susan wrote thanking me for the flowers and said her wedding was beautiful.

At the end of the month I sent two boxes of clothing to the Midwest flood relief. It reminded me of the time when I was little and had a puppet show in our house to collect money for the Rimouski Flood in Quebec. Why would I select these types of disasters to respond to? I had been told by a psychic that in my last lifetime I had run away to sea and drowned in a storm.



At the beginning of August Elizabeth and I left for a walk in the Winds and I forgot my watch. This would be the first trip I wouldn't be able to tell the passing hours during the night, something I relied on when I couldn't sleep. We parked at the Scab Creek Trailhead, again, and with heavy packs and ten days' worth of food started out. I had to overcome this feeling of fear in the pit of my stomach about not having my watch, my Linus blanket. Elizabeth, always the optimist, suggested I might sleep better without it. That was a possibility. We weren't going back.

I forgot about it on the uphill trek to Toboggan Lakes, which was steep enough to make you forget about everything except putting one foot in front of the other. Since I hadn't done my quota of day hikes to get in shape, I wasn't prepared physically. The muscle spasms started halfway in and we had to stop twice, drop our packs and massage my quivering quads, after which Elizabeth ran me through some stretches. The wooden sign was a welcome sight after nine miles and we picked our way through a very swollen south fork under scattered clouds for the last mile to Dream Lake. Lots of bugs.

A light rain sent us indoors for dinner while distant lightning streaked the sky and rumblings of thunder rolled around remote peaks. After hanging our two large plastic bags of food, we wandered until dusk, feeling a need to loosen up after so strenuous a hike, and then built a fire.

On every trip we wonder what drives us to walk in the wilderness. Elizabeth was raised in the mountains and loves their magic. It's playtime for her. Always answering to others, I need to be alone to feel my own needs. Life is painful at times and we can't always share our pain. But in

the wilderness that pain ebbs because of the infinite space we move through. Nothing is close, there is nothing to hang on to. Carrying a backpack makes me feel independent and self-sufficient. I love the exercise. It makes me feel alive. I love the woods and the high country - fresh air, freedom and raw nature. I need to take risks like sleeping in a tent in bear country. I wonder if my forebears were mountain people, and it's in my blood.

In the early hours of the morning a tempest tyrannized the valley. As the sky turned light we stripped the rain fly halfway and warm sun filtered through the screen. Hot tea. The purified water tasted fishy but the warmth was worth it. A huge grey cloud hung in the basin as we explored trails radiating from the lake. We shared our first apple on the rust-colored, pebbled beach, as we watched the sky darken and a storm roll in. Hail, then light snow sent us hurrying home. We got into our sleeping bags and spent an enviable afternoon, adrift in our thoughts. Suddenly the sun surfaced but it was still too cold to stay outdoors. Clouds accumulating on the horizon predicted a cold stormy night.

It was overcast the next morning as we struck camp and started the ten miles to Valley Lake. It took most of the day to get there and then find a perfect site. Unexpectedly a man appeared at our tent, always an intrusion, and asked if we were the only ones here and how old I was. I was embarrassed not to respond so I told him I was fifty-three instead of telling him to mind his own business. I was reminded of my feelings of intimidation, an old story and a bad example for my daughter. It seemed that a white-haired woman was an anachronism in the wilderness. He said he was a Boy Scout leader camping with his six sons across the lake and apologized for having ridden horses in when he heard we walked. I asked if he could spare some matches since he was leaving the next day. We were monitoring our matches - they were somewhere, but not with us - and he said he'd drop them by in the morning. After dinner we strolled around the lake and saw him bathing nude. How did he expect us to get around him? Because he was so weird, I got paranoid, thinking he might rape us or something, and when we got back to our tent, I placed our cooking pots by the doorway in case he might find his way over during the night and trip over them. I laughed at myself but I was apprehensive. I told Elizabeth how I felt and we made up a story to tell him that we had AIDS and a gun. The sky cleared as the alpenglow faded on Medina Mountain and the stars came out for the first time, but we were too exhausted to stay out and enjoy the night sky.

We awoke to frost on the tent and on Elizabeth's jacket she had forgotten outside. The Boy Scout leader stopped by to leave a box of matches and apologized for his nude bathing. After breakfast we hiked into narrow alpine Europe Canyon to the 11,400' pass overlooking the Wind River Indian Reservation and Milky Lakes. While surveying the landscape east of the divide, a gentle, rolling green world, we enjoyed a well-earned lunch. A permit was needed to descend to the lakes, so we didn't.

On the way back to our tent, Elizabeth picked up a map in a plastic bag that somebody had dropped. It was to supply us with an interesting route on our return, anything to get off the main trail. On a side trip to Long Lake we found a NOLS (National Outdoor Leadership School) identification stamp - their feces spread out on a rock to dry and blow away. Elizabeth knew about this practice, but I didn't appreciate it. We got back after sundown and, warmed by a

crackling fire, enjoyed our dinner. In an attempt to get rid of excess weight, I burned the pages I had read in my paperback book, much to her dismay. I had taught her that books were precious but a few ounces every day added up. We dropped easily into bed after a long twelve-mile day and dozed during another quiet night.

A clear sky welcomed us. At North Fork Lake, we picked up the Fremont Trail, a rugged alternative to the Highline, which stayed above tree-line and closer to the divide. Steep and slow to the top of 10,848' Hat Pass. One mile in on the Timico Lake Trail, we set up camp in a thicket of trees on a knoll above the lake, then walked along the shore to check out the route described on the map Elizabeth had found. During the night as wind gusts shook the tent, and light rain, thunder and lightning moved overhead, we felt exposed, experienced weird vibes and planned to leave at first light.

Under a cloudy sky, windy and buggy, we headed back to the Fremont Trail and then north, climbing gradually. The path became less distinct and eventually just cairns marked the way. Those petered out so we dropped our packs and split up to look around. Elizabeth glimpsed a lake through the trees far below and from the map it looked like we should be heading down. At the lake she dug a sign out of the bushes that said Baldy Lakes - not on our map. Just as she found a perfect spot, a man approached to see if we were staying where we were, seemingly one of the only flat places to camp. During the conversation I mentioned we would be walking down to the Fremont Trail in the morning. He said that trail was up not down. As a geologist, the one thing he could do well was read maps and left to get his. As we crouched over his topo map, so much more detailed than ours, we realized why we had been so confused. We had left the Fremont Trail too early because we couldn't see the second pass on our map and were shocked to find that we were not in Bald Mountain Basin, but rather at Baldy Lakes.

After setting up camp we changed to flip-flops and took an afternoon stroll back up to the Fremont Trail and another 300' to the high pass to see the basin we had missed. Because it would be dark within the hour and a storm was moving in, we decided to leave immediately, promising to return someday. It would not be for another seven years.

Baldy Lake was blissful and we planned a two-night stay. All was well until I discovered I had my period. Never having considered it a possibility being well into menopause, I had brought nothing. I came up with the idea of cutting my Patagonia turtleneck, which had been with me on every trip since moving west fifteen years ago, into strips and christened them my Patagonia Period Pads. No calcium lactate for cramps but that was the least of my worries. Bears know when a woman is menstruating. I dug a deep hole far from our site for my calls of nature, and while Elizabeth poured water over my hands, I scrubbed my pads with soap, rinsed them clean, and hung them out to dry. It took a long time and a lot of water, but with nowhere to go and nothing to do I relaxed into the awareness of my work.

We built a large fire to keep warm, although our backs stayed cold, and stared into the sky at Cassiopeia, Cepheus, Ursa Minor and Major, Draco, Andromeda and tried hard to spy the Great Square. It was too cold to stay out long and we retired just before a storm moved in. A

quiet night with no wind.

It was the clearest morning since the beginning of our trip. We still had ambivalent feelings about our decision to stay at the lake rather than moving up to the basin and crossing Angel Pass to the Brown Cliffs and Alpine Lakes, one of the wildest, most remote regions of the Winds. I worried about the high passes and getting down off the divide because it had been stormy almost every day. We were certainly safer here but was that what we wanted? After breakfast we talked about my life: why I had done what I did, what motivated me to move on and how I felt being adopted. Was it really any different and, if so, where did that difference lie? After reading all those books about adoption, I had started to feel compassion for the little girl I used to be and what she went through. Did Elizabeth ever think about the divorce and what she experienced? It was only after I moved away from my parents that I began to listen to my instinct which eventually led to the divorce. Did my mother love me like I loved my daughter? When Elizabeth hugged me I felt a love and security I had never felt before. My mother couldn't handle me and always told me to "wait until your father gets home," so we never resolved anything. I wasn't hers and she could only mother me up to a point. My father took on that responsibility. Maybe I was his child. Hmmmm. An interesting thought.

It was windy and chilly even though the sun was out as we walked around the lake on white sand, wading in tepid, calf-high water. Another try for Bald Mountain Basin and Angel Pass found us leaving cairns to mark the way since we were off trail. Each time we reached the top of a hill, there was another to climb and the pass which looked very steep wasn't getting any closer. We gave up and retraced our steps in the waning late afternoon light. It was almost dark when we got back to the tent and, too tired for dinner, ate some ramen, made a fire and played gin rummy as the evening shadows beckoned the cold.

Today, the eighth day, we were heading south, closing the loop, and because the sky was clear we decided to take the alternate route on that map Elizabeth found. We walked down to the Bell Lakes Trail, up two miles to the Timico cutoff, and started the climb to the saddle southwest of Round Top Mountain. Everything was frosty and we were wearing all of our clothes. At the top a packer took a picture of us while his mule Ruby rested from the long climb. She sank to her knees in snow as they descended and quickly disappeared into the trees below. It was late afternoon when we picked up the new Highline Trail to Lake Vera where we had planned to camp, but didn't feel comfortable in such closed quarters so we continued on, trying desperately to get above tree-line. Seven and a half miles later, at dusk, we arrived at a sign we could barely read, Junction Lake, which, much to our surprise, was very close to our final destination. It was too dark to go on. Exhausted, we set up the tent and Elizabeth ran back to the creek to get some water because the lake below was swampy. We were too tired to eat anything but a cup of hot soup. If there would be anywhere in the Winds for bears, it would be here, she remarked. It took me awhile to fall asleep.

"Look! No one's here!" I said as I peeked out of the tent in the early morning. "Who wants to be? We're in a swamp. They should have named this place Swamp Lake!" exclaimed Elizabeth.

A clear day welcomed us as we hiked the four miles to Dream Lake with our swampy socks hanging from our packs to dry. Tired from yesterday, we quickly put up the tent in our usual spot and Elizabeth fell asleep. A late afternoon stroll to Raid Lake, where we sat on rocks jutting out into the middle of the water and walked in the sand, so comforting to our feet. A huge fire kept us warm that evening and I finished and burned the last pages of my paperback book.

A clear morning except for stratus clouds to the north and our mixed feelings, always upon leaving. Emerging from the wilderness was always a shock, but it was wonderful to take off boots, peel off socks and relax in true fulfillment, a *fait accompli*, an ephemeral feeling, an enduring memory. In two hours we would be home. Again.



Elizabeth left for a wilderness ranch in the Absaroka Mountains to cook for the dudes, and eleven days later Steve and I left for Canada. I spoke to Valerie in late September and she told me she was pregnant. I got a headache. Was she happy? Was this what she wanted? Or what her husband wanted?

An iridologist and a naturopath had both asked if we had the mercury removed from our teeth. I read that the toxicity of silver fillings could be the cause of many health problems so I started looking for a dentist who knew what I was talking about. Ours told us we were just lining their pockets by undergoing this procedure. I finally found one in Calgary. My teeth had always been weak and my mouth was full of metal. My mother had berated me for taking my kids off sugar saying I was depriving them. I wish she had deprived me.

It was the middle of October when we returned to Wyoming for a month, just to check up on things at home. When we went back to Canada in November, the creek was filling with ice and the next day we had to break through for water. A week later the creek, so crucial to our survival, finally froze.

To get water, we loaded the truck with gallon bottles (seventy-three lasted approximately ten days), and drove three miles to a campground on the river or, when that area was snowed in, a few more miles to a year-round stream across the valley. It was always an adventure. With the truck parked on the side of the road, we placed our solar pump down by the creek with a short hose to the water, attached it to the car battery by a long wire, and then ran a hose from the pump to the jugs in the back of the truck. It took one minute to fill each gallon. On a sunny day we would sit in the back of the truck, smoke a joint, and let the pump do its thing. Once home we hauled the water in large plastic tubs, twelve gallons at a time, from the truck down to our cabin and stored them under the sink. During the winter snow melting on the stove augmented our supply. In the summer all we had to do was run the hose from the pump at the creek directly to the cabin, one hundred and sixty-seven feet, and the wire from our solar panels at the house to the pump. Chop wood, carry water.

Valerie wrote that she was starting to show and wished me a belated happy birthday. She told me Susan had gone out to dinner with my father and Beverly in Montreal and was very upset because she saw my mother's ring on Beverly's finger. She thought I should have been asked if I wanted it. Or perhaps his grand- daughters. I guess Beverly came first. It was emotionally confusing for my children as well as for me.

193 STEPS TO BECOMING A GRANDMA

✎ 1994 ✎

"The white regime handed over power in South Africa. Twenty-eight million black Africans voted in the first non-racially divided elections. Nelson Mandela was installed as president of South Africa."

On New Year's Day we called Elizabeth, then living in Colorado. A bicycle trip (her idea) in New Zealand (which I had suggested) wasn't what she really wanted to do, so she had cashed in her ticket and bought one for France instead. It's amazing how parents influence their children and how, unknowingly, we interfere with their plans.

Three weeks later Elizabeth landed in Paris, the city of her dreams. She had sent us a postcard from Chicago's O'Hare airport telling us she had sold her Bug and she and her girlfriend Helen were waiting to board their flight.

Our wilderness existence was truly like living in the pioneer days. No sooner did I finish one thing, there was something else to do that couldn't be put off or avoided. If we didn't cut kindling, we got cold during the night. If we didn't keep the kerosene lamps filled, we didn't have light. The bathroom floor I had built so hurriedly wasn't level, and I was having trouble balancing the new composting toilet. I couldn't use my electric typewriter to edit my cookbook because the solar was too low. I kept getting threats of having our telephone in Wyoming cut off, our answering service and only tie to the world, because forwarded mail took so long to get to Canada that my checks always arrived late. The cabin felt smaller than it was because of the long hours of darkness. My hands were always dirty from stoking the fire, carrying and stacking firewood, and handling sooty pots. And Elizabeth was far away, farther than she had been in a long time. Other than that everything was fine.

Elizabeth wrote:

I love Paris. I could live here, at least for a while. My French is coming back. The Parisians are warm and friendly - I am surprised. The rude ones work in the stores, mostly in tourist places like Arc de Triomphe - but the people on the streets stop and ask if we need help when they see two blondes hunched over a map. I've never tasted such good bread and cheese. Ooh la la. Our hostel is close to a boulangerie, l'agriculture biologique (organic produce) and the metro - so easy and cheap. We go everywhere on it. This morning we sat in Notre Dame and I sketched the stained glass mandala window. Students sat in a line, drawing. They dress dark: black, brown, deep reds and greens. The shoes are modern and all black, so chic. I understand Picasso now. The French faces are angular: cheekbones uneven (mostly men), deep furrowed brows, thick bottom lips, curved uppers. We walked to the top of the Pantheon

across from Notre Dame near the Sorbonne and went inside. Below in the basement is the crypt where Victor Hugo, Monet, Rousseau and Emile Zola are buried. Some names are etched on the wall and I put a piece of paper up and with a pencil, rubbed Hugo's name in my journal. I didn't think I would like perfume but the stuff here is like roses, vineyards and essences of grapes and oranges. I tried some from a bottle shaped like a naked lady for 800 francs (\$120 U.S.)! "Oooff," as the French murmur. Paris is expensive ... though I am doing well. We'll move on soon. I know I will be back and back and back.

The long hours of a northern Canadian winter were shortening. Elizabeth was happy and that made me feel good. Then why did I have this listless blue feeling? Maybe my iron was low. Butterflies tugging at my lashes reminded me my eyes were changing. I hadn't done my exercises for months although my mercury-saturated parotid glands, supposedly causing my blurred vision, should have kicked in after taking proto-morphogens for so long. I couldn't carve Chief Seattle, my Indian stone, because my wrist bones had locked after pounding on the bathroom addition and the chiropractor couldn't fix them. Attempts to deal with my adoption seemed futile.

Another letter from Elizabeth:

On my birthday I caught the metro, then walked to an outdoor market of l'agriculture biologique filled with fruits, vegetables, goat and sheep cheese, fruit-sweetened jams and cookies. I bought a potato pancake to eat on the way home and some lettuce, endive and cauliflower. The pate is out of this world. A young man at the hostel told me about a tour he does for young people to see the city other than tourist spots. Helen wasn't interested so I met Florent and three others. The tour was fabulous. I'm not one to go on tours, but Paris is so big and so much. We walked down narrow streets into courtyards to the palace where Victor Hugo lived, to Descartes' home where he discovered his thought, "I think, therefore I am," and saw where Jim Morrison lived. Went to Mouffetard Street where students from the universities hung out. I learned about the left and right banks and why Parisian cars have yellow lights instead of white. Later we all (Helen too) went to Sacre Coeur up on Montmartre, checked out the sexy Moulin Rouge and drank wine with Camemhert and grapes. Then Florent invited us to a party at his apartment. What a day! Friday we head to St. Tropez where we hope to find a place to rent.

A postcard of Picasso's "Etudes," and another from atop the Eiffel Tower took eight days and I was happy to hear from her.

J'aime Paris. Museums ... ooh la la. Picasso was my favorite. We are leaving for Avignon. You might have thought it was you who made me change my mind to go to New Zealand instead of Europe but it wasn't. In the end I make my own decisions. I've been to the Louvre, stood under the Arc de Triomphe; ate pate and rye bread near the Tuileries Gardens, in the distance the Eiffel Tower, Trocadero - it's the center of Paris; sat in the bottom level of the Musee de l'Orangerie on a soft round-cushioned couch and gazed in awe at Monet's lilies, then walked up to them so that I was two inches away. It was mesmerizing.

I had a revelation. While studying my birth certificate, which I do quite often thinking that its secrets might be revealed, the penciled notes I never paid much attention to, which I now refer to as the "Norton Notes," came clear.

Norton, Vt. 11/24/44 10 days C L C (or E) No. 694 (not sure of 9) Norton, Vt. 8/9/46 2 weeks
Co C (hard to read)

I had searched through Utah because the letters "Vt" looked like "Ut" and found nothing. Now I combed through maps of the tiny state of Vermont, searching especially the border towns, and recalled the almost imperceptible feeling of fright mixed with excitement that I might find a town called Norton. Suddenly, there it was in the northeast corner. I gasped, my stomach knotted up and I turned warm all over. For the first time, finding my birth mother became a possibility. I looked at the map over and over again. It was still there, not far from the border crossing I had used regularly. Until now I had been concentrating my search efforts in Canada. I wrote to Montpelier, the capital, asking about Norton in 1944 and 1946, the dates in the Norton notes, and to the "Beacon of Vermont," a newsletter mentioned in the back of one of the books I had read, asking for help. I told them I was looking for my birth mother and gave them all my information including the Norton Notes.

It seemed reasonable for my birth mother to have gone to Montreal to give birth. She might have stayed with an aunt or at a home for unwed mothers, or just come for the delivery. A few weeks later my letter to the Beacon was returned with no forwarding address.

On that same day a package arrived in the mail containing a portrait of Elizabeth from Montmartre. They were leaving for St. Tropez and were going to stay with a new French girlfriend, Emmanuella. Steve and I had just returned from getting fifty-seven gallons of water from the creek across the valley and after putting on her favorite tape of Vivaldi's Concertos, we reread her letter. She must have loved getting her portrait done even though we thought the resemblance was minimal. She sounded happy.

I decided to try to get some information about Norton on my own so when in town I called the information operator in Vermont who transferred me to her supervisor. There was no Chamber of Commerce, only a village school, State Police and Vermont State Chamber. The school sounded like a good idea. The principal told me that everybody read the News & Sentinel out of Colebrook, New Hampshire. She'd call them to send me their advertising rates and I could place an ad in the classified column. She gave me the town clerk's name and phone number when I asked whom to talk to about family lists. That got me to Marion Nelson. I told her of my circumstances but she was busy and didn't think, at this time, she could get a list of families living in Norton in 1940. We got to talking. She had graduated from high school in 1939, had lived in Norton all her life, and knew everybody. She thought my birth mother may have gotten pregnant and had to leave town for the last months, probably visiting an aunt or grandmother. She was catching on. I asked her to think back about the girls in her school. Did she remember if any of them had been gone for the summer holidays and had started school late

(because I was born at the end of October)? She started to get curious but was still too busy to take any more time. I appealed to her saying that this was my only chance. I needed a list of families living in Norton in 1940. She said there were about a hundred. I told her I didn't have a phone and would write her a letter.

That day I wrote to her and enclosed a Polaroid Steve took of me. Perhaps she would see a resemblance that would spark a memory. My mother probably wasn't there anymore, maybe married with another name, but there was a Norton and those notes on the back of my birth certificate were a reality. Perhaps my mother was American.

"There is a tenacity in blood relationships which is basic to humans, a tribal instinct as old as man." ²

The TRIAD (TRuth In ADOption) Society of Canada sent a packet of contacts for non-identifying information. Although many adoptees experienced a lifelong need to reunite with blood relatives, the urge in others was triggered by a traumatic experience such as a death of a close relative, the birth of a child, or an unexplained illness. An adoptee's desire to search rarely reflected a dissatisfaction with the adoptive family. In fact, experience had shown that adoptees, once reunited with their birth families, developed an even stronger bond with their adoptive families. This, along with an inner satisfaction of having put together the pieces of their lives, could have a positive effect on the overall well-being of an adoptee. TRIAD suggested I write to The Adoption Secretariat, Mme. Lise Leboeuf, in Montreal because I was born in Quebec.



Another welcome letter from Elizabeth in Interlaken:

Just got to Switzerland. Paris is sophisticated, buzzes at a different level than anything I've ever felt. Standing on the Arc de Triomphe was like being on a cliff looking down on roads that stretched out like rays from the sun. We went to the Louvre twice. I saw the Mona Lisa, even she gets the blues, you can tell by the way she smiles; the first Impressionists, from whom Van Gogh, Monet and Pissaro were inspired. The train station in Paris was crazy ... so confusing. I found the best thing to do when trying to get somewhere is to ask, then go a block and ask again. We got on a train to Avignon and called Emmanuella, who picked us up and drove us to her apartment. First time we could cook. Helen left for Frankfurt to see her parents. The town is inside castle walls and bordered by the Rhone River. The walls are in case of flooding. When she returned, she had a cold and was strange for a few days. Left for St. Tropez, a beautiful, quaint, chic, intriguing town with a great health food store, like Mendocino, where we rented an apartment for \$18 a day. A dream come true. The south of France was cloudy and cold. Narrow streets. Lights hung between buildings. A cemetery right on the edge of the sea. It looked mystical, like a Fellini movie. We caught a bus to St. Raphael, then to Frejus where another bus took us through windy, hilly streets to a youth hostel. Frejus is a theater town, like San Francisco. We hopped a train to Nice, passed Cannes and Antibes on the way, places in my mind for years. It's finally true. I'm here. Stayed in a hostel in Nice for

six days. Nice was beautiful, different. Monaco Monte Carlo, and the Modern Art Museum amazed me. I love the art. These artists use everything - smashed cars, old sheets, canvas after canvas of the same tail of a fish. Incredible. The Matisse Museum left me emotional, unsettled, removed and inspired. There is nothing like France. Life exists through art.

Another letter:

Traveling with Helen has its ups and downs but it's too dangerous to travel alone. We agree on some things and places, but she gets on my nerves and I feel distant from her. This is my first time spending so much time with someone other than you and I get tied up with how much to give and how much to let go. Switzerland is beautiful - like Banff. It is slower paced, a nice change from France. I am, always, discovering who I am. The more confident I become (and I know it's there) which means focusing my energy on something, the happier I am and think less of menial things. Traveling is making me think. I'm having such a good time, I can't believe it.

Elizabeth phoned, at a predetermined time, from Interlaken, a beautiful tourist ski town where the mountains looked like the Himalayas; she was working at the youth hostel getting free room and board. How would I like to walk in the Alps? She was off to Lucerne, Salzburg, Vienna, Florence, maybe Venice, maybe Greece. It was good to hear her voice. She loved traveling and sounded exhilarated.



My fingernails are vertically ridged. I know I need iron. I wait for news and think about my kids. Valerie was still working with seven weeks to her due date. Susan was traveling while her husband was studying. Elizabeth wrote saying they had just left Bern, capital of Switzerland, a Gothic city, and were on a train to Salzburg with a change in Zurich.

In March the vital letter from Vermont arrived. There it was in type - Norton, Vermont. It was, however, a disappointment. Marion thought because my last name was Clarke, that was who I was looking for. She had discovered a couple, the Clarkes, had bought land in Norton on one of the dates in the Norton Notes. She suggested I place an ad in the Newport Daily Express, a newspaper with a wider readership than the News & Sentinel and hoped this bit of information would lead me to my mother. I too wished it would, but it wasn't going to be so easy. I answered explaining that Clarke had nothing to do with my birth parents and thanked her for her trouble. Another blind alley.

The next day I received a letter from B & C Search Assistance of Vermont. The letter I had written to "Friends of Adoption" had been forwarded to them. They suggested the best place to search was where I was born. Some places in Canada do the search for you and they told me to call Parent Finders for the best procedure. They included the address of a woman in Ottawa, Ontario, who did searches in Canada and closed saying that if my search found me returning to Vermont, I should contact them again.

I wrote back to Carolyn Flood at B & C Search Assistance telling her the Norton Notes had to do with somebody in that town since they were on the back of my birth certificate and asked her why she didn't think this was reason enough to look there.

A postcard from Salzburg:

Stepping deeper into history, the town lies atop a small mountain, old churches where archbishops lived, and the *platz* (place) of Mozart. An outdoor market where people buy little plates of sausage, cheese and a roll with mustard. Dark heavy breads packed with dried fruits and nuts and always a small stand with biologic food. People are rude, like everywhere else (mostly store owners) but they help. They seem to have a cautious amusement and curiosity of foreigners. Thank God Helen speaks German. We walked around to the places where *The Sound of Music* was filmed. It feels good to be moving on after spending ten days here.

At the end of the month a postcard from Firenze, Italy. Florence was beautiful. She'd also gone to Pisa; "That tower really leans." They found the people nice, a break from Austria and Switzerland. They had taken a night train but it was so crowded they got off in a small town, checked into a hotel and the next day traveled to Brindisi and boarded a ferry to Patras, Greece. Now she was on an island called Zakynthos. Greece was very beautiful, the people gregarious, a mix between Nepalis and Italians. They had rented a moped for a day. Helen was leaving in a few days from Athens. Elizabeth wasn't sure of her plans but thought she too might be coming back soon.

Two days later a package arrived with a sample copy of the News & Sentinel. I sent my same ad and \$6.00 for two weeks. As I looked through the paper I found something about Norton. The Sunday Service at St. Bernard's Church was officiated by Father Faustina. I wrote to him asking for names of girls who attended the convent school between 1938 and 1942. Perhaps he could dig up some records. Marion had told me there wasn't a high school and all the girls went to the convent school.

David Grierson of CBC in Vancouver answered my letter inquiring about a program on adoption aired a while ago. I had tuned in late and missed most of it. He suggested I contact the organization called Forget-Me-Not.

In April a letter from Elizabeth:

Athens is big and busy. I like it. Terraces, meadows with olive trees. The air in Europe is so bad, so much exhaust. We saw the Acropolis, huge marble pillars. The Greeks have dark hair, fuzzy like mine. Their language sounds like a mix of Italian, French and Spanish. I'm thinking of coming back in two weeks."

She wrote the travel agent's number if I wanted to call her; otherwise she'd call when she arrived in the States. When I phoned, the agent said she had heard from Elizabeth a few days ago and checked to see if there was a message for me. Too late. We had missed one another and I'd just have to wait.

On the same day I received a letter from Marion Nelson that stunned me:

You were born in Montreal and therefore there is no record in Norton, and you were probably baptized in Montreal and there would be no church record here of your baptism. You said Clarke had nothing to do with your real mother and Norton has nothing to do with the town of Norton. I am unable to give you any information.

I was blown away because I thought I had gotten through to her during our earlier phone conversation. I felt intimidated. The bad feelings persisted until I talked to Steve and listened to him expound on some government employees, who they were, how a uniform gave a false sense of security and a large sense of authority to those who wore them. Either I had not been clear as to what I wanted or she did not want to be bothered with me. I was definitely threatened by aggressive women.

The next day I joined ALMA, the Adoptees' Liberty Movement Association, who helped with searches and changing existing statutes. I was placed on their International Reunion Registry Databank, a multi-level, computerized, cross-indexing system that contained the vital statistics of adoptees, natural parents and all persons separated by adoption for possible matching. In most cases adoptees did not know their original names and natural parents didn't know the adoptive names of the children they had surrendered. The facts they did know were the sex of the child, date and place of birth. I had second thoughts.

ALMA's motto: "The truth of his origin is the birthright of every man." Along with my \$60 membership card they sent an extensive Searcher's Guide that suggested, among other things, to check baptismal records. Since I didn't know my original name it was still possible to find these records by date only, but one must go in person. However, you had to know the right church. Other ideas: look up birth announcements in old newspapers and check for notices of adoptions; run ads in personals columns; ask your ALMA search assistant to help discover your original name - they have developed complex techniques that have been withheld from the general membership because independent searchers have abused some search sources thereby "closing the door" to all. Information was available from Post Offices (U.S. Directory of Post Offices), new and old telephone books, state and public libraries and archives, historical and genealogical libraries and societies, drivers' licenses, voter registration records. There was also the ALMA Buddy Service for doing out-of-town research. These people would assist ALMA members by checking local records which one could not reach.

Yesterday I had the feeling that nothing would come of all this. I couldn't imagine finding my birth mother in my lifetime. I didn't know if I really cared, but when I read about reunions in the ALMA newsletter, there were tears in my eyes. Steve said that knowing me and my energy, he felt that my mother would be looking too. There was so much on the radio about outraged adoptees wanting to know their roots.

Carolyn Flood of B & C Search Assistance in Vermont wrote again telling me to get non-

identifying information from the adoption agency or lawyer that handled my adoption and to check my birth certificate to see if a court was involved. I didn't know the lawyer or the agency, and had already gone to the court and found nothing. So I sent a letter to the woman in Ottawa, Ontario she had suggested, asking where I could get information about my adoption, thinking, hoping, she might know somebody in Montreal.

Elizabeth returned to the U.S. staying in Boulder. She'd had a difficult time in Greece and we'd get together soon and talk about it. I was glad she was back.



We started a garden. I read an article which said, "It makes no difference what kind of soil you have. The recipe for improvement is the same for all." I had always planned on bringing in earth for a raised bed because of the high clay content of our soil. Instead I would dig, add compost and dig some more, channeling my energy into a garden to balance the emotional digging I was doing.

While I was sitting on the edge of this small grassy basin, bathed in sunlight, clear of tall trees, packed down by animals who slept there and the weight of the snow, I felt things might grow here. It was receptive, warm and soothing. So we smoked a joint to christen the garden and talked about all the wholesomeness we would harvest in a few months. At the word christen there was a twinge in my stomach, a quickening of my heart, and I wondered about my baptism. We raked the area, covered it with black plastic, weighted it down with logs to deter the growth of weeds, and planned a sturdy fence to keep out rabbits, elk, deer and bear. We'd grow root vegetables and all the hardy bitters we loved.

A few days later I left for the coast by bus to spend time with Valerie, who was in the last days of her pregnancy. The Coquihalla Highway, a short cut between Kamloops and Hope riding high on a crest, was beautiful except for the parts that were clear-cut. She met me at the depot and I was impressed as to how easy she got around being so big. We spent the next few days running around the city doing what she needed to do along with fulfilling all her husband's demands. He seemed oblivious to her condition. When I brought it up to her, she said she didn't mind. She had nothing else to do. And I thought back to my situation with her father. I took care of everything so why shouldn't she! On our last day together we walked 193 stair steps down to a nude beach for a picnic lunch. I was pretty anxious about it. What if she suddenly went into labor?

She was worried about a name for her baby. Before she told me their choice, she said I probably wouldn't like it and didn't understand why everybody couldn't just support them. I hadn't said anything. If a boy, she was going to name him after her father. I was shocked. Jewish people didn't normally name their children after a living relative. I saw a daughter so tied to her father and so in need of his love that doing anything to please him was plausible. Did she really think this would make her father love her more? These are the unconscious drives that make people do things they don't understand and later regret. It made me aware of my tie to my father, how much control he had over me and how I thought my mother was always

at fault. We're just fettered to our fathers. All women are.

While there, I called Kathryn from Forget-Me-Not, a birth mother herself, who suggested calling the Catholic churches in Montreal for a copy of my baptismal record, to say that my information had been mislaid and I was forming a family tree for my children. "Ask to see the records of female babies baptized on November 2. Churches have excellent records." She suggested approaching my father differently, not in a threatening way. Tell him, she suggested, that I hadn't found the missing piece in my life, that I was pursuing it and would like to share it with him. I needed some answers and had to do this for myself, not to hurt him. She also told me about an organization in Florida called the Musser Foundation which was going to all ends to match families.

A day after I left, Valerie gave birth to a baby girl. "The stairs did it, Ma!" she exclaimed when I called. I had a granddaughter, Caroline Esther, her middle name after my mother. I wasn't sure how I felt about being a grandmother. It might take a little time to get used to. I was fifty-four and felt like I was still in my twenties. But I was a grandmother and accumulating a bloodline.

I sent a letter to the Musser Foundation and promptly received a packet of information. Their founder, Sandy Musser, had been indicted, found guilty and sentenced to four months in federal prison, two months house arrest with an electronic device and three years probation for the "crime" of reuniting families. She was no longer permitted to do adoption searches during the term of her probation. Though the government had attempted to silence her, she was determined to carry on her work by continuing to speak out and lobby for open adoption records. They were the only company to offer a no find - no fee guarantee. I sent a \$15 check to be listed on their reunion registry.

Sandy Musser believed that adoption should be a last resort. If there were no possibility of a child remaining with its family of origin, then the placement must be open, with the natural family's input. To sever an individual's genetic roots was unhealthy, cruel, and contrary to a free society. All individuals had a right to know their genetic relatives. Parents who had "lost" their children had a need and a right to know of their welfare. The Foundation served all individuals who had been touched in some way by the "adoption experience." They believed that at the core of every human being was the God-given, innate desire to "connect" with the birth family from whom they'd become separated. She was alarmed that: adult adoptees did not have access to their original birth certificates, or court and agency records; birth and adoption information had been altered and falsified, then protected by confidentiality laws; adoptees were unable to obtain a current medical history, especially in the light of three thousand known genetic diseases; confidentiality laws had stripped adoptees of their own, their children's and their grandchildren's entire genealogical history and genetic heritage. In a free and democratic society, these basic human rights, promised to all Americans, were denied to adopted adults.



I had been thinking lately that Quebec might be the place to look. But I continued the viability of

Vermont, finally getting up the nerve to write Marion Nelson again, desperately asking for a list of families with teenage daughters who lived in Norton between 1940, when I was born, and 1946, the last date of the Norton Notes. Since the convent was no longer in existence, I asked her to please send me the name of the priest and his address at Island Pond, the closest Catholic church to Norton. Perhaps the files from the convent had been sent to him and were collecting dust in some forgotten corner. I wondered if these notes on my birth certificate were my father's way of telling me about my mother because he couldn't tell me himself. People don't arbitrarily write on a legal document. I was grabbing at straws.

Towards the end of the month our friends from Hawaii whom we had met during the Mendocino years asked if we would like to care take their house on the Big Island for six months. They needed to spend time in Washington State and would feel more relaxed if somebody were living there. It sounded wonderful and we were going to think about it.

We left for Wyoming where a letter awaited me from Sylvia Kirstein, coordinator of Adoption Services at Ville Marie Child and Youth Protection Centre in Montreal. She had received my request for information but I had omitted a photocopy of my birth certificate and driver's license, and she needed proof before proceeding with a search.

At the end of the month we picked Elizabeth up in Daniel, Wyoming where she had gotten a ride from Boulder. She had been back for two months and seemed distant and troubled.

I received a letter from the Government of Quebec, Ministere of Health and Social Services in response to my letter to Mrs. Lise Leboeuf. It had only taken six months. They said there was no centralized data system on adoption and each region in the province had a Child and Youth Protection Centre responsible for preserving adoption files. They suggested I request information from the Centre Ville Marie which I had already done. My search seemed to be narrowing down to this one place.

After I wrote to the Vermont Department of Libraries for a Norton phone book, they responded saying they didn't have one for Norton but a history of the town had been written by Lydia Andrews; they had two copies on an in-library-use only. The librarian also sent a genealogical research sheet from the Historical Society. Most institutions in Vermont were small and did not have staffs to conduct extensive genealogical research, but there were some people who would do it for a fee. I wrote to Lydia Andrews in hopes of purchasing a copy of her book and sent it to the librarian to forward to her. I was getting nowhere and feeling very frustrated.

In the meantime we had rented our Wyoming cabin to friends because we were spending so much time away; and Steve, Elizabeth and I planned to leave for Canada at the end of the month. On our last day a letter arrived from Kathi Randolph from the ALMA Buddy System suggesting I write to a woman in Calais, Vermont, who lived near Montpelier, the capital. If I ran into a situation where "in person" research was necessary, she might be able to help me. I sent her a letter but never received an answer.

On September 4th, Elizabeth and I, on our way to use our neighbor's phone, met him coming down to see us. "Your cabin in Wyoming is gone," he said. "Where did it go?" Elizabeth asked. "It burned to the ground," he casually replied. Oh my God! My first concern was that I would have to tell Steve. It seemed that our renter had taken it upon himself to clean the chimney even though the fire inspector had given his seal of approval. The fire started in the ceiling area where the stovepipe had disconnected from the smokestack. By the time the fire department arrived, the fire had spread to the rest of the building with flames reaching thirty feet into the air. About ten firefighters from Grand Teton National Park and fifteen from Jackson had responded to the scene. The estimated damage was in excess of \$150,000.

We lost everything except our artwork which we had left in the bunkhouse about twenty-five yards from the cabin.

Our beautiful log cabin was gone. When we told Steve about the fire, his only regret was not having been there to capture it on film. It didn't bother him as much as it did me. Hawaii looked real good now and we purchased tickets to leave at the end of the month.

I received a letter from our astrologer friend in New York:

After speaking with you this morning, I discovered that the fire took place under the influence of Mars, Uranus and Neptune. What this actually meant too, being so close to Steve's birthday, is that new beginnings must follow this whole mess. This past 1994 was a heavy pivot, touching all things, people. So an accurate account of the incident may have been inspired by your activities which were taking you away from Wyoming - first Canada and now Hawaii. It seems as if you've figured it out. What's happening now is that the U.S. is under cosmic attack. 'God' came into being at times like we're in now because people (the ancient Greeks) needed something to believe in, something far away, a celestial home. paradise was not enough. What will happen: Pluto will move into Sagittarius in 1995 and will bring total change Earth wise. The 26th degree of Sagittarius is the hottest spot in the Zodiac. It is a mountain to cross. But Pluto won't make that crossing until a few years into the 21st century. Things happen gradually, taking years to show evidence of total change. Pluto has subjected the world to sexual freedom and bondage at the same time. AIDS, abortion killings, drugs from down under - Burma - Columbia. Religion is institutionally attacked with all the sexual happenings and homosexuality high- lighted again. This is all Pluto. Nostradamus calculated his end of the world as we know it on Pluto's motion. The Destroyer is Pluto. It wipes the slate clean for a new beginning. As to whether the U.S. government and the Constitution will survive, we don't know how much change will help. The continent has nearly been depleted of its vital resources. The rate of carbon dioxide has increased to alarming proportions. Storms, droughts, pestilence and social unrest are all related to the planetary positions of Uranus, Saturn and Neptune. The future for America is not bright.

You personally are passing from a good luck period to a period of opportunity. personal planetary positions favor you because of the large presence of Mercury, Venus, Jupiter and pluto, and the sun in Scorpio. This is a very blessed period for you and also Steve, for it's

about home, property, personal values. Your health, vitality, hopes and dreams of the past seven years can materialize. Elizabeth's career should receive a boost. Her age cycle is not developed to an advanced stage -she's new on the block -yet.

As I mentioned before, this period is 75% positive. It will not repeat itself for another 12 years. Safeguard your assets and keep your wits about you, don't move too quickly on things unless you really have 'that feeling.' So, providential blessings from me to you, and may you be able to handle success.

Labor Day. With the main stream of the population on the move, it was nice to be in the wilderness. The first clear blue-sky day although there were some clouds on the western horizon. Yesterday we took showers indoors for the first time. A two-gallon black plastic shower bag hung from a hook in the ceiling; a makeshift shower curtain hung from a round rod and fell into a rectangular plastic tub. It took two of us to heave the filled hot water bag up and onto the ceiling hook, with the help of a pulley, and it was worth it. The shower was sensuous.

Sylvia Kirstein, coordinator of the adoption program at Ville Marie Centre, wrote that unfortunately they had no records regarding my adoption. They had, however, a filing system listed by birth dates and if my birth parents ever started looking for me, they might be able to obtain the information for which I was looking.

I wrote to Joan Vanstone, head of the Parent Finders' National Office in Vancouver, to see if I was still on their registry, if she knew anything about Dr. Rabinovitch who my father had told me delivered me, if there were investigatory records on him, and where my papers of relinquishment would be if there were any. I had been registered in CARR, Canadian Adoption Reunion Register, since 1990. The infamous Dr. R. was apparently not one to have been terribly reputable in arranging his private adoptions, and I had learned that he was the subject of an investigation in Montreal in the mid-forties. To see if she could be of help, she asked a number of questions to which I had no answers, then told me about a social worker in Quebec named Suzanne Fortier, who had recently helped an adoptee from New York locate her birth mother, but there was a fee of \$450 attached to her services. She ended by suggesting that where my adoption was finalized was the place to start to search. Copies of the Polk Directory - a genealogical library, a listing of street addresses of institutions, residents, hospitals, maternity homes, churches and convents - could be found at the Montreal Public Library.

We closed the cabin in Canada and left for Seattle, stopping in Hope overnight where our clothes were attacked by a bug that actually ate through the fabric. The manager of the motel didn't believe us and I eventually wrote a letter to the British Columbia Tourist Bureau, which had endorsed them, and reported the incident. They replied that it was a reputable motel and there had never been trouble with them before. Well, what about this? It's amazing how no

one takes responsibility for anything.

The next day we checked into a motel in Tacoma, searched for a health food restaurant, parked our truck in our friend's garage and washed our clothes with insecticidal soap at a laundromat hoping to salvage something. In the morning the Air porter shuttle van dropped us at the Seattle Airport.

The flight to Hawaii took four hours and suddenly in the distance, tiny green shapes in a large expanse of ocean came into view. As we exited the plane into the aromatic, humid, island air, our excitement grew. We picked up our friend's car in Hilo and drove up the coast wafted by warm winds, past exotic foliage cascading over walls that lined the highway - yellow, fuschia, red and green flowers. Travel brochures sprang to life - Hawaiian vistas, sugarcane fields, palm trees and Mauna Loa volcano. We arrived at the large white plantation home high on a hill in one of the tiny coastal villages along the narrow winding road. Their cat met us at the front door. It was an elegant historical building with a lanai (porch) running across the entire front overlooking a few half-hidden homes and a glimpse of the blue Pacific. Not a bad spot.

The next morning we turned on the TV to find a tsunami warning on all channels. We got pretty crazy and didn't unpack but called our friend's son who was living on the other side of the island to find out what to do. Should we drive to high ground? Obviously this happened quite often and nobody got upset. Then we saw one of the neighbors mowing his lawn oblivious to the news. We unpacked and, still thinking of giant tidal waves, hesitantly familiarized ourselves with our new home.

The house was very large and bright and backed up to a tropical woodland with branches cascading over the roof of the building. The driveway was lined with papaya trees while banana trees marked the south edge of the property. There was a huge cluster of the classic yellow fruit in the open garage, hung there by the gardener to ripen for us. Each roomy bedroom had its own bathroom. Our friends had warned us that the ceiling edges might be moldy and asked if we would wash the walls with Clorox to kill the mold. At the time we didn't think anything of it.

On our first trip to the town of Hilo, we discovered a well-stocked health food store and an outdoor market - tables piled high with tantalizing, tropical vegetables, fresh fabulous iridescent fish on ice, a guy slicing the tops off coconuts for a taste of the milk and soft white flesh, and containers of incredible flowers - Cattleya orchids, anthuriums, hibiscus, birds of paradise, poinsettias, heliconia and protea transferred a vacant corner into a lush, colorful extravaganza of tropical trade.

I received a forwarded letter from the Ministry of Health and Social Services saying they had forwarded my letter written to Lise Leboeuf to Christine Beaulieu. On October 27, my birthday, I wrote to Parent Finders in Ontario for the Polk Directory.

The Vermont librarian had written that the telephone company serving Norton was New England Telephone. She had no way of knowing whether they had an archive of old directories

and gave me their toll free number, which didn't work from Hawaii. The author Lydia Andrews had died and her book was out of print. She hadn't been able to locate a source for me to purchase a copy but enclosed a list of antiquarian and secondhand book dealers in Vermont. Another way to get information on Norton residents would be to ask for copies of the voter registration lists or property tax lists - births, deaths, marriages. This would have to be requested from the Town Clerk, whom I already knew quite well.

I wrote to Suzanne Fortier, at Joan Vanstone's advice, asking about her services. Marion Nelson had given me the names of four high school friends, one of whom lived in Sherbrooke, Quebec. When I realized that Suzanne lived there too, I asked if she would look her up. I also sent a letter to the Public Records Research Department in Montpelier for vital records of Norton for 1940-46.

I wrote to Marion for the voter registration for 1940, '44 and '46 (the years of my birth and the Norton Notes) and the high school register records for 1939 and '40 to see if there was a young girl who might have gone to Montreal to give birth. I sent a letter to Michael Dunn Books in Newport to see if they had a copy of Lydia Andrews' book. I felt I was doing something by keeping up with correspondence even if I was getting nowhere. It was exciting each time I received a letter in answer to one of mine. I was working on my adoption and confronting my feelings, anxious to know this mysterious mother of mine.

"Search provides a useful activity for the adoptee en route to developing an authentic sense of self." ³



Valerie, on vacation in Maui, called and Elizabeth and I made plans to meet the next day at the Kona Airport on the other side of the island to spend the day together. I was going to see my granddaughter for the first time.

She got off the plane with Caroline, asleep in her backpack. We had brought lunch, beach chairs and an umbrella, and as we drove up the coast to our favorite beach, Valerie, sitting in the back, cried. We hadn't seen one another for six months and she must have been anxious about this meeting. Her reaction brought tears to my eyes and I realized that my oldest daughter and I had slowly grown even further apart. There was so much conflict between us that to establish some kind of relationship took a lot of work on both our parts. We found a quiet spot, spread our towels, and while Valerie and Elizabeth wallowed in the waves, I watched Caroline, a magical, angelic being, part of me and my real mother, proof of my pedigree. For the few hours we had until they had to catch their return flight to Maui, we caught up on the past months. She described her life as a new mother.

Her in-laws came to her house every day until she came home from work. She went jogging while her husband stayed with Caroline, and then he did his thing. Her life hadn't changed much since having her baby. I reflected on how mine had altered when I became a mother, so different from hers. I stayed home with my kids. But the times too were different. Today's

working mothers don't have that luxury. Nor do their children. Only time will tell how the children survive. It was a heavy emotional day and painful to part.

Suzanne Fortier wrote telling me she was a social worker and her main task was to reunite adoptees with their natural mothers. They worked only on adoptions handled by their services, and because they didn't have a file on me, she referred me to two social service centres that had recovered all adoption files of babies born in Montreal: C.P.E.J. (Centre de Protection de l'enfance et de la jeunesse) of Anglophone Montreal and C.P.E.J. of the Center of Montreal. They needed my adoptive parents' names and address at the time of adoption. I wrote to both. She also included Marion's high school girlfriend's address in Sherbrooke.

I guess nobody had a file on me. It was all done underground, illegally, illicitly - in other words - I was a "black market" baby.

I wrote to the woman in Sherbrooke, about seventy years old now, telling her how I got her name, how I thought I might be tied to Norton, that I was looking for my birth mother, who might have gone to the same school she did, and gave her my birth information. I asked her for the name of the convent where she had attended high school and any of the girls' names who were her friends. Could this woman be my mother?

I sent a letter to Canadian Birthright Centers in Montreal and one to Suzanne Fortier asking if she could get the addresses for the head branches of the churches so I could get my baptismal record.

The end of another year with no information. I didn't feel any closer to finding my mother than when I had begun four years ago.

THE KAHUNA SEES CANCER

☞ 1995 ☞

The referendum in 1992 had failed. "The 1995 Quebec referendum resulted in a victory for federalism [a party seeking an independent Quebec], but the vote was frighteningly close." "The Quebec economy performed less well than the Canadian economy as a whole in the year following the referendum. Many companies transferred jobs out of Montreal."

For the first time in my life I didn't mind talking about my adoption; in fact saying, "I am adopted" had become commonplace.

Suzanne Fortier wrote that she wanted us to talk before referring me anywhere. When I called her at home she was excited to hear I was calling from Hawaii, "half across the world." She told me I wasn't Catholic because Catholic babies go to Catholic families through nuns, priests or charities. I told her I had written to the main church and she said the letters were opened by secretaries and usually set aside. The church had two sets of records, one for the government and one for the church. I must be English Protestant, she opined. Suzanne had just finished working on a case with Lynn Whitcomb, who worked for the English-speaking Ville Marie Social Services. She may have something to say about the doctor as other girls probably went to him and could be looking as well. She worried about the cost of the call but I told her I was so thrilled to be speaking to a real person instead of writing letters. She told me to be sure to tell Lynn that the rabbi wouldn't allow me to marry until I had gone through a mikvah. She also recommended sending \$12 to the Ministre de la Justice in Quebec City for a copy of my birth certificate and baptismal record, just to see what they would send. I was hopeful again.

I wrote three letters: to the Board of Medical Examiners asking about Dr. R.; to the Archveche de Montreal for my baptismal records; and to the Montreal Public Library for the Polk Directory for maternity home addresses in 1940. The Arch-veche de Montreal replied that in order to know the name of the parish where I was baptized, I should write to Place de la Justice in Quebec City and mention my full name, the name of my parents, my date of birth and enclose a stamped return envelope. That was the same address Suzanne told me about.

Meanwhile life went on in sunny, heavenly Hawaii. We went to the beach almost every day; shopped at farmers' markets for lush local produce; visited Volcanoes National Park where we walked the floor of the crater, peered through lava tunnels, and later stood on the beach, mesmerized at watching lava flow into the ocean and solidifying. We hiked in the rainforest of Kapola State Park on the Hamakua coast, where weeping bark and misty ohias kept us permanently damp; ambled through stands of bamboo to the south rim of steep-walled, lush Waipio Valley; and walked the relentless 25% grade road down to the black sand beach below and back up again. Rainbows, sweet-smelling plumeria, multicolored hibiscus, soft gentle breezes.

I sent a letter to the Vermont Department of Libraries, Reference and Law Division, for the 1944 and 1946 newspapers, to see if anything stood out with the initials from the Norton Notes; and to the Newport Daily Express for the name of the newspaper that served Norton in those years. I told them I was looking for lost relatives and had only initials and dates. They answered that they searched their volumes with no success and told me to contact the Town Clerk. Everything seemed to boil down to my friend Marion Nelson.

I was pleasantly surprised to receive a letter from her the next day. Enclosed was a copy of the Voters List of Norton for 1940. She didn't have the lists for 1944 or 1946 but sent a copy of 1948. Of the one hundred and sixty-seven names on the Voters Lists in those early years, nineteen were still living. None of the initials of the names matched those in my Norton Notes. I thanked her and asked if there was anybody I could write to for the high school records of 1940.

At the beginning of February the Direction de L'Etat Civil from Quebec City returned my letter asking them for my baptismal record and on the bottom was written "We found only Judith Margaret Rosen, born 1940, October 27 (my birth- date); Father: Cyril, John; Mother: Hodde, Elsie. This was the first piece of solid information I received since I started my search. Could they have been my parents and that my birth name? How strange, the name was Rosen and my adoptive name was Rosenberg.

I searched through the Norton Voter's List to see if there was a name like that. There wasn't, but in Marion Nelson's letter, there was the name Margaret L. Rosen of Newport, Vermont, who bought land in Norton on November 7, 1944. The date in the Norton notes was November 11, 1944. The name Margaret L. Rosen almost matched Judith Margaret Rosen on the baptismal record. Could these two names be connected? One born in 1940 in Quebec and the other bought land in Vermont in 1944 - doubtful.

I called Lynn Whitcomb who had said that because it had been a Jewish adoption, she would transfer me to Rita Bloom, who worked for the Jewish agency, Baron de Hirsch. Back to the Baron. She thought I might be Catholic because of the quick baptismal, within a week of my birth, and she would see what parish was in the vicinity of my parents' house and hospital at that time and try to get my papers. The next day Rita Bloom called. She wasn't as warm as Suzanne or Lynn and the first thing she asked, rather abruptly, was why was I looking now. Why not now? Wasn't she aware of how difficult it is to search and how tenuous adoptees' feelings are when it comes to searching? The only place she knew that burned down was the Doctor's Hospital on Cote des Neiges and the word "baptized" might have been a mistake and might be the date my father registered me at the synagogue. She was going to call back because the name "Rosenberg" (my adoptive parents' true last name) had a blank space beside it in her files. I knew my last name could have been there from the letter I had sent to Sylvia Kirstein who was at the same office (Ville Marie). If there were a file I would have to wait for my name to come up, the waiting list being what it was at the time. I felt Rita was not empathetic in such delicate matters. The conversation upset me.

I saw an article in the local paper about a lecture being given by a Hawaiian Kahuna, a shaman, called Papa Henry. I knew I had to attend. Because it was in the evening Steve didn't want me to drive the narrow winding highway by myself so he, Elizabeth and I decided to go together. About sixty people filled the room to hear this renowned healer. He was in his eighties with short-cropped white hair, an unblemished complexion, and he had learned from his great-grandmother everything about herbs, many of which he picked with his students on the Mauna Loa Volcano, the second highest and most massive mountain in the world. He told about visitors who picked up pieces of lava at Volcanoes National Park to take home with them, even though there were warning signs not to remove any because the wrath of Pele, the goddess of fire who lived in the volcano, would be invoked.

Over the years thousands of packages of rocks were returned by mail because strange things happened to those people when they got home. We looked at one another and knew we had to return our samples as soon as possible. He talked about people he had treated, places all over the world he had visited to give lectures and cures, and he mentioned that "pakalolo," Hawaiian for marijuana, wasn't good to smoke and caused much trouble. After his talk he said that anybody wanting to see him privately should leave their names and phone numbers with his assistant, who would get in touch with us. He was fascinating and we left our information hoping to hear from him soon.

I telephoned Lynn Whitcomb. The church she had been searching for was the St. Jean Baptiste Parish. She had called and found no baptismal on November 2nd. But there were other denominations. Even though I didn't feel the urge to pursue this route, I wrote to Suzanne Fortier for other churches in Montreal. I also sent a letter to Kathi Randolph thanking her for having sent an address of an adoptee born in Montreal to whom I had written but never received an answer.

In the meantime we scheduled an appointment to see Papa Henry. I decided to have my last joint so when I went to see him I could tell him I had stopped smoking. Quitting had been on my mind for a long time but I had never had a good enough reason to do it.

On our way to Volcanoes National Park to return our contraband rocks, we picked up our mail to find a letter from our astrologer friend in New York:

"The first thing is that Mars is lingering in Leo and Virgo until July and affects everyone and everything. Mars stations, standing still, also causes deep feelings, so beware. Mauna Kea was a big destination for the last big eclipse of this century a couple of years ago. It's almost 14,000 feet up and abounds with observatories. The ring of fire encompasses the Pacific world: Japan to the north circling the islands across to Alaska and down the coast of California, South America, curving around the South Pacific Basin, New Zealand to New Guinea, Indonesia, the Philippines. Polynesia, Hawaii to Tuamotu and Western Samoa are in the middle. Melanesia archipelago is very hot now. What this all means is that new land is rising, resulting from earthquaking under the ocean. The volcanic activity is only a small portion of the entire picture. Polynesian island chains are the visible parts of huge mountain

chains under the ocean. The Atlantic Ocean seems to have only one huge mountain range stretching from Iceland all the way to Antarctica. Because the Atlantic ridge is very old, it is more settled than the Pacific. The pull or tension on the areas are caused by planetary positions - such as Uranus, Saturn and Neptune for the last twelve years. Now you can add Pluto and Jupiter. As a result of these planets ganging up in one space, Earth is affected more than usual. Each new moon and full moon causes more tension and triggers full-scale fractures in the ocean. Fortunately, the Hawaiian chain of islands is growing more land near where you are. Hawaii seems safe for now. One of the scary things about sailing the South Pacific is you constantly see sea swells and don't know what is causing it. It's one thing if the tides are at play, and another if there are eruptions underneath. The natives know. They are the most experienced sea navigators in the world. They have paid the price too for thousands have perished at sea."

With our precious cargo we hiked the trail to where we had taken the lava rocks and returned them to their rightful spot so that Pele would not be perturbed, crossed the floor of the crater, climbed back up to the rim, and felt a lot easier driving home.

The next day we three visited Papa Henry. His table was surrounded by gifts from people who had come to see him because he would not take money for his services. His grandmother had told him he would lose his power if he did. We described our problems. He looked into our eyes and handed us each a plastic bag of herbs with directions for a cleansing drink of tea to drink daily and a diet sheet. We were already eating close to his regimen except for the fish - only white fish from the reef, no deep sea fish like mahi-mahi. No potatoes, tomatoes or large eggplants, just the long narrow type. We also had to bathe our eyes, in the morning and evening, in a bowl filled with a gallon of spring water and specific leaves we had to pick fresh daily, cut up in a certain way. Some freshly baked rolls were our thanks to this amazing man. The next morning I noticed I had a different bag of herbs from Steve and Elizabeth, labeled "for all types of cancer and hepatitis." I caught my breath.

I worried about it, afraid to bring it up, not wanting to disturb the peace (an adoption trait) and bring attention to myself, but I finally discussed it with Steve. We decided to call Papa Henry, who was away and wouldn't be back for another week. Depression tugged at my heart and I had a difficult time staying in the present as my mind drifted to the possibility of my existence ending too soon. Steve and I had such a good life together.

The mail arrived and I received the baptismal record of Judith Margaret Rosen from Quebec and the next morning I awoke at 4:30 a.m. Hawaii time and called the Town Clerk of Newport, Vermont asking about Margaret L. Rosen. She was born in 1920, married in 1938 and had a girl on June 4, 1940 (the same year I was born) in Newport, June Maureen, who had a birth certificate in Newport but no hospital listing. I called for her driver's license to see if she was still alive. They told me to enclose her date of birth along with \$4 to the Motor Vehicle Department in Montpelier for her current address. If she were my mother, she had been twenty when she had me.

The next day I sent a copy of the letter with the name Judith Margaret Rosen and the parents'

names of John Cyril and Elsie Hodde to Suzanne to verify them. I sent \$12 for her birth certificate to Direction de L'Etat Civil in Quebec and \$5 for June Maureen Rosen's birth certificate to Montpelier, Vermont. I then wrote

Newport's Town Clerk for school registrations. Could I have been one of these kids if I hadn't been given away?

I made a chart of all the names and dates but nothing seemed to mean anything. At the same time I wrote to the Bibliotheque Nationale du Quebec (National Library of Quebec) for copies of a list of hospitals in Canada in Lovell's Montreal Directory for 1939 and 1940. I was looking for addresses of maternity homes and hospitals where my birth mother could have stayed and where I might have been born. In the Montreal Classified Telephone Directory of July 1940 under Private Hospitals was listed Rabinovitch, Dr. Phineas, 201 St. Joseph Blvd. Another listing under Mt. Royal Hospital ... see Rabinovitch, Dr. Phineas. So Dr. R. and the Mt. Royal Hospital were one and the same. There was also another address for the Mount Royal Hospital at 4351 Esplanade, private.

On March 4th we drove to Hilo to pick up our plane tickets for our return. Elizabeth had decided to stay after finding a room to rent in town. The next morning I called Papa Henry but he was still away. There was nothing to do but wait. I lived and died a little each day until finally he answered the phone. I asked if he remembered me. He said he did. I asked him if I had cancer. He said yes without hesitating and caught me off guard. How did he know? By my eyes, he answered. They showed a tiny red spot which indicated cancer. It was in my lungs, which had always been the seat of my problems. I had pleurisy as a child. My marble sculpting hadn't helped and even though I had worn a mask, I wasn't always as careful as I should have been. I asked why he hadn't told me before, he replied he didn't think I was ready to hear it. He was very responsive when I asked if I could come and talk to him again, and gave me directions to his daughter's house in Hilo, where he stayed most of the time. We set up a meeting for Monday and I knew I was in for a difficult weekend. The time was tortuous and I thought of nothing else. The first moments in the morning were wonderful until the dreaded realization crept slowly into my consciousness and I didn't think I could face another day.

Just south of Hilo we found the obscure overgrown driveway that lead to Papa Henry's daughter's house. He was a busy man and we waited outside, walking around the grounds amongst avocado, papaya and apple trees until he was free. He sat at a small desk in a screened room at the end of the front porch. There were boxes and bags of dried herbs, books and correspondence piled high. I asked where exactly he saw the cancer. There were twelve medium sized lumps in the lower lobes of my lungs but they weren't part of my physical body yet and wouldn't show up on X-rays. I asked him what I could do. Without hesitating he told me to forget my children and take care of myself. I cried. They would come back when they were ready, he said. He recounted a story about his own children and how one of them had stabbed him in the back, though not literally, and we talked and I cried.

"Cancer patients may have been cut off from the resources of their unconscious processes. Many recovered patients have come to see their illness as, in part, a message to value and

pay more attention to their unconscious self rather than to the demands of others." ³

I told him I was adopted and didn't know anything about my roots. He said, "If God didn't want you to be here, you wouldn't be here." That made me smile and gave me another perspective to consider. He checked my blood by placing one hand on the side of my knee and the other at my ankle, counting how long it took the blood to move between the two points. He also placed his hands on two different spots on my neck and counted. Steve and I were both at 23 when we should have been at 5. Our blood moved too slowly, the reason for the disease. I told him I had been eating organic food for the last fifteen years. He said if I hadn't, I would have been dead. He told me to continue meditating, follow his diet, take his herbs, and we would "nip it in the bud." I smiled, we hugged and again I left him some freshly baked rolls. He said to bring more in two weeks, our next visit. My spirits were high and I was very excited. This would take work but I was going to heal.

Steve and I discussed our circumstances. I wanted to stay, there was no doubt about that, and because our friends were coming back to their house and we had purchased our return tickets, some rearranging had to be accomplished. We cashed in our tickets, called a realtor for a rental, searched for a car, and decided to stay for the rest of the year. Papa Henry said I needed to be on his regimen for six cycles, each cycle being forty days, thirty-three days on and seven off. Two hundred and forty days was eight months. It was March 20th. That would take us to the end of November.

Elizabeth found an unfurnished house for us outside Waimea - one bedroom, a large kitchen, wood stove, glass-walled living room that led to a deck overlooking a creek that ran down a deep gully along the back of the property, and a fifteen-minute drive to our favorite beach on the west side of the island. The Mauna Kea Hotel was closed for renovations and the private beach almost always deserted. We signed a lease for six months.

Garage sales and secondhand shops supplied us with the few things we needed to make ourselves comfortable, and what we couldn't find, we bought, and settled in to enjoy our new neighborhood. I got some books on cancer, *Getting Well Again* by O. Carl & Stephanie Simonton & James L. Creighton; *Love, Medicine & Miracles* by Bernie Siegel; *Mind as Healer, Mind as Slayer* by Kenneth Pelletier; *You Can Heal Your Life* by Louise Hay; *Censured for Curing Cancer* by Dr. Max Gerson; and read about resentment, grief and meditating for clearing out cancer cells and sending energy back to my children, parents, etc.

"Lung cancer patients typically had 'poor outlets for emotional discharge.'" ⁴

"People who continually ignore their emotional needs pay the price physically." ⁵

"Cancer patients have suffered severe emotional disturbance in early childhood up to the age of fifteen, and so experienced as a great sense of loss, loneliness, anxiety and rejection and therefore compensate by trying to constantly please others and therefore win their affection." ⁶

"Certain psychological patterns characteristic of cancer people: a lost relationship prior to diagnosis of cancer; an inability to express hostility in their own defense; feelings of

unworthiness and self-dislike; tension over the relationship with one or both parents; a traumatic event in childhood (emotional disruption between the patient and parent during early childhood is a major factor in predisposition to cancer later in life)." ⁷ "Individuals who experience loss in the years before adolescence are especially vulnerable to loss later. The child does not know how to mourn or is taught to be a 'good girl' and not to mourn. Grief gets frozen within her. Then losses later in life reawaken painful memories and the person is confronted with a double loss. Inhibited emotional expression or disrupted relationships are only one factor and are not causative in and of themselves. They are only one step in a progression involving many factors which collectively predisposes a person towards cancer." ⁸ "Those predisposing factors most agreed upon as negative personality characteristics of the cancer patient are: a great tendency to hold onto resentment and a marked inability to forgive; a tendency towards self-pity; a poor ability to develop and maintain meaningful and long-term relationships; a very poor self-image. A positive attitude is a must." ⁹ "Illness itself might be the ultimate defense in a desperate last-ditch effort to cope with overwhelming circumstances, to avoid dealing with problems they have no hope of managing successfully. Where the mind tends to focus, the emotions and physiology are likely to follow." ¹¹

Some pastels set me up for sketching the treasure-trove of tropical flora and sublime sunsets. Steve edited his script and started working towards getting a film together with some local talent. Elizabeth was attending acting classes and many of the students were interested.

As the months passed my blood improved. I meditated every morning, bathed my eyes twice a day in herbs and spring water (we were buying seven gallons of water a week), and thought about my life. A telephone session with Joy, the psychic in Mendocino, told me that the last three years of my life had stressed me out. My two older daughters and I were still distant, my mother had died, my father and I were estranged, our house had burned down, Elizabeth was in dire straits emotionally, and my ex-husband was still stirring things up. Stress had drained my energy and I hadn't replenished it. She told me about my health and confirmed my condition.

Because the vital life force energy of the kidneys is low, it cannot feed into the digestive system and support that, which gives you a situation called excess stomach heat rising. It rises into the heart. There isn't a balance between the energy flows in your body because your energy is low and can't circulate effectively. Blockage and potential problem in the lungs need to be dealt with. Laughing releases excess heat from the heart.

Your adoptive parents had a great desire to make the past disappear, for you to be their child. Your birth mother was very young - a teenager or in her early twenties. Emotionally she wasn't capable of caring for and nurturing a child. Neither your adoptive parents nor the people surrounding the mother wanted that information to get out. At that time it was very shameful. Your mother came from a good family. It had to do with the way in which it happened - perhaps a serviceman who went off to war, perhaps died or never returned letters. There had been a romance. For your parents and birth mother adoption was an answer to a prayer. There is some Danish or Norwegian blood, not clear from mother or father. It appears there

was a fire but whether your records were burned isn't clear. Some records may have been saved. The mother was Christian. There may be three siblings.

Psychic phone session with Joy, 1995, Hawaii

I decided to plant a garden and dig in the dirt again, which always connected me to the earth, soothed my deepest distress, and stimulated a blossoming of life; this activity would counteract the tumors that were stealing my strength.

In the middle of the month I wrote to Marion Nelson asking her if #694, the number at the top of my birth certificate, could have anything to do with a land purchase, deed number or post office box in Norton.

Meg Page from Vermont Department of Libraries wrote. She had spoken with a number of people about my "Norton Notes," had finally found one with an idea and wanted me to write to Janet Walker in the Research Section. Her thought was that the earlier date was the date of original filing of the birth certificate, the later date a correction, name change, or when the adoption took place. The front of the birth certificate would give her further information. I sent Janet all my information as well as the confusing information about the names; Judith Margaret Rosen, born on the same date as me in Quebec; June Maureen Rosen, born on June 4, 1940, to Margaret L. Rosen, who had purchased land in Norton on the date in the Norton notes. I wondered if these two babies had anything to do with me.

Janet Walker didn't know what the initials on the back of my birth certificate stood for. If Judith Margaret Rosen and I were the same person, the probate court would not have allowed me to see the record. It would probably not even have acknowledged the record. She was sorry she couldn't be of more help.

The next morning Rita Bloom from Ville Marie called. The "Rosenberg" in her files was not me. On that same day I received a photostat from the Vermont Motor Vehicle Bureau with Margaret L. Rosen's address, and, before the day was done, I had canceled out Margaret as my possible mother. I called her and we had a lovely talk. She mentioned an Elsie Daniels, one of the natives of Norton from the voting list (Elsie Hodde, mother of Judith Margaret Rosen of Quebec) who was at the Quimby Fishing Camp in Norton. Percy, her husband, was one of the guides. She was called Elsie but her real name was Ethel. My adoptive father was an ardent fisherman and went away on weekends to a fishing camp. Perhaps he had visited Quimby's and gotten one of the girls pregnant. Margaret remembered a "Weinstein" from Montreal who went fishing there but not a Rosenberg. There was a Weinstein in our family, my father's brother-in-law, who sometimes fished with him. Margaret said while the men went fishing, the women gabbed and did a lot of knitting. That was interesting; I have always knitted. It would be right for my mother to have done so too. She was sorry she wasn't my mother, and she did have a daughter June who was born June 4, 1940 but it wasn't me. I had spent a lot of time tracking the wrong woman.

I spoke to Marion again and asked if she could find out Elsie Daniels' maiden name. She did

and it wasn't Hodde. That was the end of that story. A few weeks later I received a short note from her saying she had thought of another person who worked for Quimby's for many years and was still working there. I wrote to him to see if he knew my father. She also sent Percy's address, and I wrote to him to see if he remembered anybody who had worked at Quimby's in 1940. I never received an answer from either person.

We returned our friend's car and bought a used red Mazda. The next day Susan called, after Beverly had called her, to tell me my father was ill. I was upset that Beverly hadn't called me directly. While grounding in the morning I asked my higher self for help. It said "practice."

Margaret Rosen wrote me a long, informative, warm letter explaining why her first husband wasn't my father, how she had come to buy land in Norton and suggested that there might be papers in my father's safety deposit box with some clues. She also thought that the reason my father wouldn't tell me what I was looking for all these years was because he had a guilty conscience and I might be very shocked to find out the truth. Did I think I was ready for it? She had thought a lot about me since we had talked.

In my morning meditation I asked myself how I could get rid of resentment towards my father, my ex-husband, Valerie and Susan. The word "forgive" came up and I asked how. "Forgiving through loving."

I received a note from Judith Gingras of the office of the Justice Minister in Quebec telling me they hadn't received my \$12 cash I had sent for a copy of my birth certificate and baptismal record. I called her and she told me Judith Margaret Rosen was not me because her baptismal date was sometime in February 1941. She asked for a copy of my birth certificate and said she'd research it for me.

A letter from the woman that Kathi Randolph of ALMA Buddy System had suggested I write to, because she lived in Montpelier, arrived in answer to my letter of six months earlier. She had been sick and discouraged with her search but said I should write to Marge Garfield in East Calais, Vermont, who had been coaching her in her search. She also suggested I read B.J. Lifton's book, *Journey of the Adopted Self*.

On the 20th of March I finally planted the garden. As I watched the seedlings sprout within the first week, their leaves form and stretch towards the hot Hawaiian sun, I felt renewed and invigorated, and a deep happiness penetrated my contracted heart. At the end of the month I saw Papa Henry again. My blood was getting better: 9 and 7. Every time I visited I was now able to bring him bags of bountiful greens.

Valerie and then Susan called to tell me my father was in the hospital. When I spoke to him he sounded strong but distant. He didn't think he would come out this time. When I told him I had cancer, all he said was, "We all have to die sometime." I found him crude and unforgiving. I begged him again to talk to me about my birth mother and he said the strangest thing. If I would come to Montreal we could go into a dark, locked room and he might have something to tell me. A trip was out of the question at this time and I realized the last prospect to learn

something was going to go to his grave with him.

"My father derived a self-righteous, perverse satisfaction from carrying my life history to his grave." ¹¹

In the middle of the month Papa Henry checked me again. My blood was 7 and 6, almost normal. Three days later Susan phoned telling me that Beverly had told her my father was in a coma. When I telephoned the hospital, the nurse put my cousin on the line who told me Beverly was there. I said I didn't want to talk to her but she came on the line anyway. She accused me of not wanting to communicate, which was strange because she'd never called me to tell me anything. She finally described his condition and I knew he was close to the end. Two days later Susan called to tell me my father had died. I still find it strange that I didn't cry when he died. I cried when my mother died. I cried when Edward Abbey died. But the one person I was closest to most of my life was gone and I didn't shed a tear. The next day I spoke to Valerie, who bitterly informed me that just before my father became ill, he told her that I had disinherited her and Susan. I couldn't focus on what she meant and then a conversation with him from years ago filtered through the veil of sorrow. I had said everything we owned was going to Elizabeth because she had nobody and the girls had their father. My father's bitterness towards me never stopped until the day he died, and even then his hostility continued. It started when I had left Montreal and moved to the U.S. He had probably banked on me being around forever. The divorce and my move west added fuel to the fire. He had never really liked my ex but being married was better than living in sin, something he himself was doing. My parents were gone and I was free. Would my life change?

When Valerie asked if I wanted her to go to the funeral, I told her to do as she pleased. She didn't attend. I discussed the funeral arrangements with Susan, who surprisingly took it all in hand and called me when it was over. I asked Beverly if she would help clear out my father's apartment but she refused, then called a few days later, apologized, and said that together we would do what had to be done.

I felt strangely dispassionate about the whole thing. Not attending the funeral left me absent of the actuality of my father's death, the loss softened by the thought of having another father somewhere. But as the executrix of his will I had to deal with it. After his bank statements arrived, I found an outstanding loan to Susan and her husband. It seemed my father had called the loan a month before he died and they had ignored his plea. I asked Susan to send a check to the bank so I could close the account and disperse the monies. She said it was on its way. When, a few weeks later, it still hadn't been deposited, I called her again. She said the check was being mailed that morning. It never did arrive and I wrote saying since my father had been so generous to them they should take care of the matter. The check never turned up and I was terribly upset, something I was not supposed to be in my condition. Valerie, not believing what was going on, called Susan and they argued. It seemed that Susan had called her father and he advised her not to pay the money back. When I received my father's mail, the contract drawn up by my daughter and her husband was included. Valerie said Susan had copied the contract she had written when she borrowed money from my father except for one change. A last phrase was added - "any balance outstanding upon my death shall be for-

given in full" and they had my father sign it. I also came across a letter from the agency from whom my father rented his apartment, saying he owed them a large sum of money because before he became ill, he had decided to rent his place for another three months but didn't have enough money to cover it. My father needed the amount that Susan and her husband owed him and felt that her father (my ex) could take over the rest of his daughter's loan. Susan was angry with my father when he called the loan, as I was when she told me about it, both of us unaware of his circumstances.

I called a woman I had met in my yoga class who was living with a judge. He said if I deleted the amount of the loan from Susan's inheritance check, she could contest the will and take me to court. I asked a lawyer about it and he said the same thing. I thought a lot about this situation and even talked to Papa Henry, who told me a story about one of his kids who had stolen money from him. That was just the way things went sometimes, but I couldn't afford to worry about it since worry depresses the immune system. I finally decided that as her mother I had to do what was morally, not necessarily legally, right, and that was to deduct the sum she owed my father from her inheritance and take the chance of whatever she might do or be advised to do by her father. Nothing ever happened. When there's a will, there's relatives.

I received a letter from Beverly with pictures of my father that were taken in Miami when they went there the previous March while my mother was in the hospital. She wrote that when they returned home my father called Susan asking her for the money he loaned her because he was worried about running short. He was not feeling well and his income from work was lost. Susan told him she would send him the money; she never did.



I wrote to Marge Garfield (the lady coaching the woman in Montpelier in her search activities) in Vermont and told her my story. Suzanne Fortier got back about John Cyril, Elsie Hodde and their daughter Judith Margaret Rosen (born the same day as me in Quebec). John Cyril and Elsie Hodge, not Hodde, had a son who, when she called him, explained he had a sister born the same day as me. So these people did exist but they weren't my parents. I called Judith Gingras of the Justice Minister's office in Quebec; she said she would send me a new birth certificate and that November 2, 1940 was the date my father had registered me at the synagogue. Things were moving along but no significant information was being uncovered.

Three months after my first visit, Papa Henry told me my blood was normal. The cancer was gone! He wanted me to stay an extra two months to make sure it would never come back. I walked on air as I left his house, smiling, a warmth pervading my body with the belief that the body can heal itself if given the right energy in the form of food and thoughts. My life was back in my hands. I was a very lucky lady.

I called Beverly to tell her that the manager of my father's apartment was going to have a garage sale to sell the contents and she didn't have to do anything.

She seemed relieved. As it happened, the man ran away with the money he made and when I

tried to contact him, I was told he had moved to British Columbia. Valerie found his phone number, called and threatened him with the police, but I told her to let it go. Since I wasn't able to take care of my father's business, I couldn't expect anything from a stranger. Months later when Valerie was in Montreal on business, I asked her to go to my father's apartment because the new landlord had called saying there were a few large plastic bags in the garage with contents belonging to my father. She found some of my letters written to my parents during the divorce and was quite shocked to discover what had really gone on. She called to tell me she had never understood what I had gone through. Of course the realization never brought us closer because her life wasn't under her control but still under her father's.

During the next two months Steve made his movie, working on weekends because everybody had jobs. The actors deferred their salaries; if the movie sold, everybody would get paid. Locations and props were donated and Elizabeth and I catered food for the cast and crew.

At the end of July, I received a letter from the Bibliotheque Nationale. The Mount Royal Hospital on Esplanade didn't exist anymore but a man named Jean Ruffo, who lived at that address, was designated, in the Lovell's City Directory, as the owner of the building. I wrote asking if he knew what happened to the hospital, if it had in fact burned down and in what year. My letter was eventually returned - no forwarding address. I was getting used to the dead ends but knew that they were inevitable and that perseverance was essential in a search. One step forward and ten steps back.

Marge Garfield (the search assistant from Vermont) wrote asking for all my information. She sent me a ton of reading material and told me about a Jewish lawyer in Ottawa, an adoptive father, who might have some suggestions. I wrote to him and never got a reply.

I answered Marge's letter and included copies of my birth certificate and my father's naturalization card which I had found among his papers (he was born in Russia and became a Canadian citizen). At the same time I wrote to Search line of Canada in Ottawa which, she had said, might be of some help. Marge responded promptly asking if I had debriefed all my living relatives, even family friends, on every detail of my early history. This might be the only tangible link left to my past. I realized one of my father's sisters was still alive at 94 as was one of his nieces, so I wrote to my cousins, Becky and Saul, for their telephone numbers. I wrote Marge telling her I went through my father's files and found a U.S. border crossing card valid from May 1943 to May 1944 issued at High gate Springs on the Vermont/Canadian border. We couldn't figure out if he used this card for working or visiting purposes since he once worked for the Canadian Pacific Railway. But it was the Canadian National Railway that passed through Norton with its final destination at Portland, Maine. My father's sister lived in Maine. Norton was a point of entry from the U.S. to Canada.

As I examined my father's papers I was shocked to find the same date on his Certificate of Naturalization as in the Norton Notes. Marge asked what was so significant about 11/24/44. It was a Friday, the day after the U.S. Thanksgiving; the other date, 8/9/46, was also a Friday. She told me to keep my focus in Canada for that was where my parents lived and where I was documented, and to consider Norton a sidebar in my search. She also found my birth entered

into the synagogue records in 1941, not on the baptismal date of November 2, 1940. Then what did November 2 mean?

At the beginning of September I wrote to the synagogue our family frequented asking for the date my father had named me. I told them that when I had been in Montreal a few years ago, I had visited the synagogue but the book for 1940 was not available.

Marge wrote back saying she had posted my case on America On-Line (AOL) in hopes of finding out some needed background.

Looking for info on Dr. Phineas Rabinovitch who was supposedly under investigation in Montreal in the early 1940's (connected with adoption abuses?). This related to a female adoptee born 10/27/40 (in Montreal or U.S.?) who had no original birth certificate, but only a certificate showing her as the child of her adoptive parents. No record anywhere of birth parents. All very mysterious. Adoptee is Jewish and raised in Montreal. May be some connection to Norton, Vermont in the 1940's. Any info, search hints, please contact ...

She told me to try and find out more about Dr. R. and so I wrote to the Board of Medical Examiners, College of Medicine.

Marge received this on-line message:

The Gazette was the only English Montreal newspaper. I will check about a Jewish newspaper. I am sure there is one. Were you given up for adoption in Montreal? If you were and your biological mother or father is Jewish, there is a chance they did it through the Jewish Agency which has now merged with the Ville Marie Child and Youth Protection Centre. I lived in Montreal for 11 years and gave up a child in 1980.

On the first of October, after bidding farewell to Elizabeth, Steve and I reluctantly left Hawaii behind, boarding a plane for Portland, Oregon where our friends would meet us. Elizabeth had decided to stay on, renting a room in a large house in Hilo from a woman and her daughter. As I watched the tiny green island disappear, with one of its volcanoes venting in the distance, I felt a piece of my life slip away - like a dream soon to be lost and forgotten. The sweet-smelling leis one of our actress friends had placed around our necks at the airport retained the redolence of Hawaii, and we felt the ambience of the island for days after. We had spent one year in this tropical paradise overcoming a crisis that would leave an indelible impression on our lives. I understood how people living on the island became re- moved from the rest of the world. They weren't attached.

Back on the mainland the sale of our Wyoming property was finalized and after a few days of visiting we headed for the Canadian border. There's nothing like an approaching border to make you feel like a criminal even though we had nothing to hide. There was a letter from Marge awaiting me on our arrival at our cabin.

She wrote that anger, sadness and frustration are some of the feelings that come up in a

search. For her they would come and go as her process went along, and it was good to have a place to express them where people didn't consider her crazy for having these feelings, i.e., support groups. She told me to try and find out about the Rabinovitch investigation/hospital fire through newspapers. There was a news index kept by every paper, probably by date, often by name. If I knew the year I could get someone to research microfilms for me. The department that oversees hospitals should be able to verify the hospital fire. Fire seemed to be a recurring theme in searches. It was a convenient way to avoid the issue. Why is it that so many adoption places burn? Then she mentioned the Musser Foundation. "Sandra Musser is a birth mother who started a search organization and was implicated by the federal government for Social Security fraud relating to adoption search. She was sold out by a colleague who was plea-bargaining her own case. She went to jail. She was and is a very committed lady, although her jail term really affected her. Not sure if she can still do searches. I am sure the Feds are keeping an eye on her."

In October I placed my usual ad in the Montreal Gazette to be printed on my birthday. Joy (the Mendocino psychic) had mentioned that when I returned to Canada I should not tax myself by living in the wilderness but rather should stay warm and relaxed for the winter months. Having planned to edit the movie in Calgary, we found an apartment in the city, brought a few things from our cabin, and bought whatever else we needed to make up a household - again - and we moved into the twentieth century, with running water, heat without chopping wood, a flush toilet and an indoor telephone.

I got a birthday package from Valerie. She was much warmer towards me since she read those letters from my father's apartment and the incident with Susan and the will. Having a phone at my fingertips made it easier to speak to one another regularly during the month.

A letter from Marge that opened with "*Oh My God!*" arrived in which she wrote that her adoptive parents made up the same story (lie) as mine; her birth mother had died in childbirth and birth father in the war. Cruel, cruel. And did she ever have guilt about killing her birth mother. It was why she never had children herself. Her parents finally admitted to her at age twenty-three that the story wasn't true. They had referred to it as "killing off her birth parents" to their friends.

In mid-November I wrote a number of letters: to the Mouvement Retrouvailles in Quebec asking for help; to the Bibliotheque Nationale for the Association of Hospitals and College of Medicine in Montreal about Dr. R.; to the synagogue for the date when I was named; to Sylvia Kirstein at Ville Marie (now Batshaw) for information on the hospital fire and Dr. R.; to the AMA of Canada for information about Dr. R.; to Susan Sharpe (at Marge's suggestion), a searcher and old timer in the adoption movement, who ran a group in Boston called The Adoption Connection telling her my facts; to Sandy Musser for suggestions; to the City Archives and the Association of Archivists of Quebec asking about Dr. R. and the fire; and I called TRIAD looking for a support group.

A woman from the synagogue responded that she couldn't find the information I requested in the date books and perhaps I was registered somewhere else. I wrote to her again and she

answered that she had looked again in the birth certificate records and unfortunately the book it would have been in was nowhere to be found. I wondered if that too had burned in some fire. She suggested I write to the Canadian Jewish Congress or to the Superior Court of Montreal, Attention: Archives Department.

In December I received a package from the Bibliotheque Nationale. Dr. R. and the Mt. Royal Hospital had the same address. It had been incorporated in 1936 with P. Charron, R.N. as his nurse, and had closed its doors in 1970. The name Charron seemed familiar and I remembered my mother calling my baby nurse, Nurse Charron. I had a photograph of her holding me when I was very tiny and thought I might try to do something with this wayward clue.

The next day I received an answer from The Adoption Connection in Boston. Nothing of any help. A letter from the College des Medecins said that a license to practice medicine was given to Dr. R. in 1926. They had no other information and never kept records of hospital fires. As far as his private adoptions were concerned, they suggested I write to the Bibliotheque Nationale du Quebec. Around in circles we go The Archives Department referred my request to another archives department which responded saying they didn't have any information concerning the infamous Dr. R.

I finally collected all the necessary addresses and wrote to my six cousins on my mother's side. They knew I was adopted but that was it. One of them rudely remarked that she didn't think I wanted to keep in touch with the family after my mother had died since I wasn't really part of the family. I wrote to my cousins Becky and Saul with whom I had been closest throughout the years. They believed my maternal grandfather had known Dr. R. and might have been involved in some way. They gave me two phone numbers. My 94-year old aunt didn't want to talk about it and denied it ever happened. And my cousin asked why I wanted to know, then revealed that when her mother died, she was adopted by her mother's sister, my aunt, and she had finally tracked her real father down calling him a bastard. I asked her why, if she had looked, she thought I shouldn't? She couldn't answer. The only thing she did tell me was my mother was older than my father and their marriage had been arranged. The end of the month found us at our cabin where we spent Christmas, a reprieve from city living.

FROM RAGS TO RICHES

✎ 1996 ✎

The "Crime Bill," which extended the death penalty to a wider number of criminal offenses along with \$8 billion for building new prisons, was supported by Clinton, even though more severe sentencing in the last twenty years had continued to add to the prison population giving the U.S. the highest rate of imprisonment in the world. Clinton, in his desire to achieve a balanced budget, but not wanting to raise taxes for the rich or disturb the military budget, continued to sacrifice the needy, the elderly and the children. And so health care, education, food stamps and single mothers suffered. Apartheid was abolished in South Africa.

I wrote to the Bibliotheque Nationale for the Nurse's Association, where I hoped to get nurse P. Charron's address. In the 1961 hospital list she was the nurse at the Mount Royal Hospital. Another letter went to the Association des Hopitaux du Quebec and the Association des Centres Hospitaliers et des Centres d'accueil Privés du Quebec for my medical records, asking when the hospital burned down and for P. Charron's address.

A week later the Association des Centres Hospitaliers wrote that they couldn't find my records, the hospital or the nurse. They suggested I write to the Health and Social Services Ministry of Quebec, which replied promptly that the hospital closed in 1970 and they hadn't been able to trace any records with my name. They thought my file might be under my parents' names.

Valerie called because she was coming to Calgary for a sales trip in a few weeks and wanted to visit. We set a date for dinner at our apartment.

I received a letter from the Canadian Jewish Congress with a short biography on Dr. R. and a photo of the building at 4351 Esplanade Avenue known as the Doctors' Hospital. They knew that one of Dr. R.'s brothers had worked there but there weren't any news clippings pertaining to a fire. That day I wrote to Dr. R.'s son but never heard from him.

Towards the end of the month Valerie came to dinner. We took some photos around the table and talked about her daughter. There were tears when it was time for her to leave. I loved to see my daughter but was afraid and hesitant to be as loving as my heart cried out to be. I live in illusion as to the reality of our relationship.

I wrote to the Ordre des Infirmieres du Quebec (the Nurses' Association) for P. Charron's address and received, at the same time, the 1995-96 phone directory from the Bibliotheque Nationale with all the P. Charron addresses. The man with whom I had been corresponding had looked in the Montreal Lovell Directory of 1936 and found a Charron but she wasn't listed in the latest book.

The Association des Hopitaux du Quebec responded saying I should write to the Ordre des

Infirmieres du Quebec, which I had already done. A few days later I received a letter from the Nurses Association saying they had in their records a Paulette Charron, retired in 1978, who could be the person I was looking for. Since all their information regarding their nurses was confidential the only way to reach her would be to prepare a message and send it to them to forward to her.

Dear Mrs. Charron,

I was born on October 27, 1940 in Montreal, Quebec. Dr. Rabinovitch was the doctor who delivered me. I believe you were his nurse and the hospital was on St. Joseph Blvd., west, where the doctor also lived. I was named Renee by the couple who adopted me, Myer and Esther Rosenherg.

In my baby book I have a picture of you holding me. I remember my mother speaking about how wonderful you were. At least I think it was you.

My parents have recently died and I am trying to find out about myself. My daughters are now having children of their own and I would like to be able to tell them my history. I was told that there was a fire and some of the records were lost.

I am fifty-five years old and have been searching for six years. I realize this happened a long time ago and if you have it in your heart to write to me, I would love to hear from you.

No response. I wrote the association again. They had sent my message but didn't know if it reached her. Another closed door. Always searching, needing to know more, I made an appointment with a psychic doctor in Calgary who told me to get rid of my anger.

You always knew about your adoption, you set it up and all the energy around it is dissonant energy. It's not harmonious and when you begin to harmonize you will find that it's irrelevant. The things that distress you most you have to let go or just try to detach from them. Those are things that trap you in trying to face things that have no relevance. So if you just assume that you knew, whatever you need to know will come at the right time. In the meantime you'll work on preparing to be a vessel, then you will find that it will focus you in your path. Once you try to focus on this and that, you won't move as quickly. Those are what the Hindus call maya or delusions that trap us in the process. Observe something and don't try to analyze it. To accept it, say you're upset and have difficulty with your adoption. Whatever you are to understand, time will understand it. That's the hardest decision. When true enlightenment comes it doesn't come at your schedule, it just happens. But you have to prepare yourself to await that enlightenment. All you have to do is raise your consciousness and you will automatically connect at that higher consciousness because your birth mother is half of you. She has your genetic makeup so it's very easy to do that. You carry your mother's blockage between your heart and solar plexus. All your emotional difficulties are with your mother. Send love to the person you dislike most. Our enemies sometimes teach us more than our friends. If you get stuck in the anger and resentment, then you enter the cancer frequencies. Convert that energy into love and light. If you do, then you do not carry resentment. Let go of your resentment. Hate is just energy; light and love will cure the energetic.



A few months before I finished working on my father's estate, I received a letter from Beverly's lawyer, a relative of hers, asking impatiently when she would get her money. I was furious and answered with a crisp letter saying things like this took time and I was surprised that, being a lawyer, he didn't understand that. I didn't hear from them again. Finally, after working on my father's records for almost a year, paying outstanding bills, answering correspondence and having his taxes done, I sent checks to everybody in his will. It was a happy day for me to get to the end of my debt to him.

Steve was busy still editing the movie, and because living in Calgary made airport access easy, I decided to fly to the coast to see my granddaughter. The flight was beautiful, the sky clear, and the Rockies thrilling from that perspective. Valerie picked me up at the airport, drove to the daycare center to get Caroline who, cranky and confused about her interrupted schedule, dozed on the way home. She was so cute, so very blonde. We slowly became friends and for three days played and laughed together. She reminded me of myself, especially her dimpled eyebrows, expressive of a mixture of pain, loss and love. I returned to Calgary gratified in my latent longing for a bloodline which my granddaughter fulfilled for me.

The film was completed. The work of selling it was ahead and since it didn't necessitate our living in the city, we blissfully returned to our wilderness cabin. It was April 7th when the creek melted and the muffled gurgle of spring runoff could be heard. Another long winter gone, the start of mud season, bright, green, tender dandelion shoots, water close by to fill our jugs, a crisp clarity to the air, and the fresh smell of new beginnings. Spring fever. Valerie called saying they wanted to visit on Canada Day, July 1st. Since Caroline had been born, she kept in touch quite regularly and I wondered if her daughter had bridged the gap between us, providing the connection for us to communicate with one another.

In the meantime we had arranged to build a log cabin and had purchased logs from a neighbor who was going to construct it on his property, then disassemble it, truck the logs over and reconstruct it.

On May 11th, a girlfriend from Calgary and I left for Wyoming while Steve remained behind to oversee the construction of the new cabin. She was going to help me retrieve our belongings left in the bunkhouse before the fire. We hadn't been back since the fire and I wasn't sure what I was going to find. As we pulled out of the driveway, the backhoe passed us and I had a twinge of regret that I wouldn't be there with Steve. It was a two-day drive with a stopover in Montana. I had arranged for a motel with kitchenette in Jackson where we could cook our meals and relax. Elizabeth was flying in from Hawaii to meet us.

On the way to the Jackson airport, the wind picked up and a turmoil of menacing charcoal clouds unsettled me. I knew this would be a difficult landing, which Elizabeth confirmed when she arrived and swore she would never fly into the valley again. Too short a runway for such a

large plane. She looked wonderful, tanned and very grown up. I always think I am going to see a little girl after not having seen her for a long time.

The burnt lower logs of our cabin were a grim reminder of the beautiful home we loved, where so much of our artwork had been created, affording us a full artistic life and the ability to make a living in this secluded valley we had fallen into one late November snowy day twenty years ago. Our Yodel wood stove stood in the middle of the blackened mess of charred timber, along with our claw-foot bathtub, and we walked around kicking through remnants. The cottonwood trees next to our cabin had survived, as had the wood pile so carefully stacked. As I unlocked the door to the bunkhouse, I was taken aback at how full it was. There was a lot of artwork, all my marble stones, Steve's prints, and household things to go through.

Even though it was miserably cold and rainy, people did show up on the weekend for our garage sale and we substantially lessened our load. After ten days of intense work, we picked up a fourteen-foot U-Haul truck, loaded it, drove our pickup onto the rear trailer, and left via the canyon road toward Idaho Falls and Interstate 15. We were pulling too much for Teton Pass.

Having been so deeply attached to this valley, pulling up roots was painful. The fact that I slept most of the way proved that leaving wasn't easy for me.

Back in Canada we unloaded everything onto wooden planks and covered it with a large tarp until the cabin was ready. The log walls were partially completed, the roof took a few more days, and it wasn't long before we moved in. Elizabeth and I laid a wood floor, she built shelves for our clothing, and we got a makeshift kitchen counter together. We had a telephone pole placed at the head of our drive-way, built a box on the pole and connected a phone. We told everybody we would be at the phone every Saturday morning at 10:00 if they wanted to reach us. At the end of the month Valerie called, canceling their trip, with some excuse about work, and I wasn't going to see my gorgeous little granddaughter. Something was up. In the next week Elizabeth and I planted a large garden and six trees, three apple and three apricot, in a clearing near the creek so watering would be easy.

In mid-July her boyfriend, whom she met in the Hilo health food store where she had worked, arrived from Hawaii. He was a Jewish prince, a psychiatrist and a firm believer in the AMA. She, on the other hand, was immersed in alternative health issues; needless to say, this created a gulf between them. They stayed in our original cabin and we wondered if he could survive such spartan lodgings. On a cold mountain morning, she, in a flowing white night gown, barefoot, with her golden curls blowing in the wind, swinging an axed while chopping wood outside the cabin, was enough to threaten any male ego. They were in love in Hawaii but who isn't in love in Hawaii? Having just returned to the mainland, he had visited his parents before driving up the coast from California and across British Columbia to see her. When they had heard their son had a girlfriend, they asked their friends, who were vacationing on the island, if they would take the young couple to dinner to check her out and report back to them. Whatever they said made his parents feel that she wasn't Jewish enough for their son. They might have been right.

Valerie called, suddenly wanting to come for the weekend. I never had my daughters and their families or boyfriends with me at the same time but always wished it might happen ... a large happy family get-together; large, maybe ... happy, more difficult. Elizabeth in the meantime was becoming disillusioned with her island romance. He wasn't much help with chores, staying in the cabin and reading while she, Steve and I filled a deep ditch we dug for a water pipe. Not much of a mountain man, but if he was good to my daughter, I could overlook almost anything. She couldn't. When we put Valerie and her family in the little cabin, asking Elizabeth and her boyfriend to spend the night in the truck's camper, he grumbled. It went downhill from there.

Caroline, my daughter's daughter, my blood, was very special and a joy to have around. She'd walk over to our cabin in the early hours of the morning by herself and wake us, ready for breakfast and another adventurous day. We never tired of her, constantly entertaining us with her wondrous ways and her spellbinding sweetness. Saturday evening as we were grilling chicken over an open fire on the marsh and watching Caroline stuff herself with steamed broccoli, our friend from Calgary turned up with a delicious carrot cake - Caroline devoured two huge helpings. Valerie silently balked at the intrusion but eventually relaxed, realizing that our friend was fun and wasn't going to deprive her of my time. Everybody left at the end of the weekend, and Elizabeth and her boyfriend headed for a week in the Parks. She warned me she might be back earlier than expected.

In the meantime life went on. I received a letter from the rental agent for the apartment where Paulette Charron (the baby nurse) had lived until 1983. The agent had obtained her phone number from a neighbor but found it no longer in service. She contacted all the Charrons in the Montreal telephone book to no avail. P. Charron was nowhere to be found. A week later the Bibliotheque Nationale wrote that they had looked through the Lovell's Criss-Cross Montreal Directory and found P. Charron's name until 1982, but after that she was no longer listed. They had looked on the Internet in Canada 411 www pages for Montreal and had enclosed 14 listings, none of which worked.

Elizabeth and her boyfriend returned within the week; he left a day later for his mother on the coast and she for Calgary to look for an apartment and a job. At the beginning of September she moved into her new lodgings and started work at the health food store. Hawaii was history.

We all got together at our cabin for Thanksgiving, had a great feast and parted with good feelings. Caroline was growing quickly. She was extraordinary, very sensitive, motivated and she loved to help me in the kitchen. She meticulously measured ingredients into a bowl, stirred, licked and waited patiently while her cookies baked, then proudly presented them to us. With her dimpled elbows deep in sudsy water, she washed all the dishes. Since I wasn't much of a grandmother in residence, I loved the little time I had with her, and in the intervals we kept in touch by mail. My mother had always typed letters to me at camp and I remembered how much they meant. I was feeling more secure that Caroline was getting to know me even though our times together were scarce and short.

A GRIZZLY ON OUR PORCH

✎ 1997 ✎

The Hale-Bopp Comet reappeared in the spring, 4,200 years after its last passage. The \$50 billion-a-year tobacco industry finally admitted that cigarettes are addictive and have been targeted at kids for years. This was the world's hottest year. 160 nations met at a UN conference in Kyoto to form a treaty for combating global warming.

I wrote to Parent Finders in Montreal and ten days later Pat Danielson answered explaining who they were and what they did. Each Parent Finders group across Canada operated on its own. The one thing they had in common was that their members' birth dates and information were sent to the Head Office in British Columbia to be entered into their computer registry, C.A.R.R. (Canadian Adoption Reunion Register) and published in their newsletters.

Valerie and Caroline kept in touch and I was surprised at how quickly my granddaughter was growing up. I loved talking to her on the phone, thrilled to hear her call me grandma, and found myself completely in love with this little girl who came into my life and unconsciously brought her mother along. I wrote her often: she sent her drawings from daycare that were quite explicit as to what inhabited her mind, and we were slowly building a bond.

I sent Parent Finders \$40 to become a member. A week later I received my membership card, #97-0091. Their newsletter included ardent accounts of re-unions, a list of searching adoptees, highlights of coming events, and addresses to write for information. I wrote to the National Personnel Records Centre, Public Archives Canada in Ottawa, Ontario to see if my birth father could have served in the armed forces (without a name, I don't know why I wrote; I thought my birth date would help) and another to the Quebec Family History Society, a non-profit organization founded in 1977 to foster the study of genealogy among the English-speaking people of Quebec.

I received a reply from the National Personnel Records Centre. Their indices for the military personnel records of former members of the Canadian Armed Forces were arranged by surname, given name, date of birth and service number as prime identifiers. Without this information it wasn't possible to make a positive identification. There were over 4,000,000 ex-military personnel records in their holdings. I guess that left me out.

Joan Vanstone of Vancouver Parent Finders wrote again telling me to get in touch with a woman at Batshaw Social Service Centre and be sure to tell her she had directed me to her personally; to enclose a copy of my birth certificate and to ask her to consult the records of the synagogue plus the court records in an effort to find an original record of my birth. When challenged by an adoptee Dr. R. had denied he did many adoptions but he wasn't believed because his name had popped up too often in the past. She told me not to mention his name because if the lady at Batshaw saw it, she might quit searching too easily. "Let's make her dig

hard for your information," she said, wanting her to do an exhaustive search on my behalf. I was heartened by her help, knowing she was a busy lady, and felt I had an ally genuinely interested in my search. I wrote the letter enclosing my necessary papers. This was the same office where Sylvia Kirstein and Rita Bloom worked but I felt that the request from Joan, as the National Director of Parent Finders, might have some influence for a more comprehensive commitment.

Valerie called to say they might be coming to visit. She was trying hard and the hold on my heart eased. I wanted my daughter back.

At the end of the month Pat Danielson wrote that she had put a request in the newsletter as well as on the Internet for anyone with information on Dr. R. to notify her.

Does anyone know anything about Dr. phineas Rabinovitch and/or his brother or brothers? It has been brought to our attention that these doctors sold babies on the black market - no papers, no records - during the 1930's and 40's. The adoptive parents' names were believed to have been put on the papers. We have discovered their residences: 4419 Esplanade Ave., 4643 Verdun Ave., 4331 St. Urbain St., 16 Ontario St. E. They may also have worked at the Mount Royal Hospital ...

It didn't take long for a response. A lady in Ontario, Sharon Edelson, was also in my situation, as well as her sister, who had been lucky enough to find a birth name in her papers. She told Pat that Dr. R. had a clinic on St. Joseph Blvd. And that was where they were born. She knew a few others as well. Pat asked if she would mind if I wrote to her. She said she'd love it. Pat asked me to send her Dr. R.'s nurse's name and address and let her give it a try. Perhaps through the nurse we could find more staff willing to talk. She had checked the newspaper archives and couldn't find that expose on Dr. R.

Since Elizabeth loved Calgary, we decided to purchase a house for her to live in and for us to visit when we came to the city to do chores. She found a tiny house in dire need of repair within walking distance of the health food store, downtown, our favorite shops and the library. We closed in a few weeks and it took the rest of the month for a carpenter to strip and redo the floors, counters, cupboards and paint the walls. Then Elizabeth could work on the rest of it slowly in her spare time.

I received a letter from Sharon Edelson and the "Birth Buddies" were born. Sharon wrote:

I must tell you how this contact came about. Pat Danielson put your request on the Internet and my cousin in New York, who was always looking for me and my late sister, picked it up and called immediately.

She proceeded to tell me her full name and date of birth as well as her sister's and that they were both adopted into the Jewish faith. She sent copies of their birth certificates and Judgments of Adoption. The Jewish community in Ottawa was small and she knew of five other adoptees who were looking, but she couldn't say if they came from Dr. R. She was told

that busloads of pregnant girls were brought to Montreal from New York and elsewhere to give birth. They were checked into the clinic under the prospective adopted parents' names so there was no record of the biological mother.

I was so excited I could hardly read the letter to Steve. Finally there was some- one like me. I responded immediately.

The family, such as it was, all got together again for a weekend at our cabin to celebrate Caroline's third birthday with a party, balloons, streamers, and presents and watched her gleefully tear at the wrappings, reveling in all the attention. I had bought a sled and Caroline, reticent at first, watched her mother take a turn on a snowy slope and then she tried. A hike to the waterfall, sloshing through the creek, building a dam across the water, finding ants under a log, bear prints in the mud and a mouse in the trap kept us busy while I documented my granddaughter on film as did Steve on video. The weekend dreamily disappeared and suddenly they were gone again. I didn't worry about her forgetting me anymore.

Because Steve's gout was relentless we went to see a doctor our neighbor recommended in the Okanagan Valley, a four-hour drive. He said something that made us realize he was psychic and I immediately asked if he could tell me my birth mother's name. He didn't hesitate - Rebecca Gershwin or Hershorn. The name sounded familiar. She was connected to me in some way and if not her, she might have some daughters and perhaps they were involved. He thought my adoptive father was my real father. My birth mother was young and slender, looked like Elizabeth, and was about eighteen or nineteen when she had me. She had a tough childhood, being little and delicate and maybe some TB or rheumatic fever, but she had a strong constitution overall. She had her public persona to keep up and had to labor hard at domestic work when she was younger but then became a baker. There was a secret part to her. She was an ardent diarist. This was where she could go to be herself. She was creative, had trouble with left brain activity but had to be practical. He said I got a real satisfaction from my writing, that it attached me to her.

I asked if he could tell what happened to me when I was eight years old that damaged my already diminished self-esteem. He said he could see it very clearly. My mother found out my father was having an affair and it brought back all the memories that had to do with her adopted daughter so she took it out on me. It was not my fault but I was forced to live with the feeling that I was worthless all these years.

"... years spent as a scapegoat in an unhappy household, years when an outsider became an easy target for verbal abuse and psychological warfare to vent their frustrations. Until she reached emotional maturity she lacked the insight to recognize that the root of the disorder that spread through the family lay in the husband- wife relationship. Instead she assumed herself to be at fault." ¹

"Life consists of a series of losses, which by themselves do not cause psychopathology. How a person reacts to loss largely determines whether there will be subsequent emotional problems, not the loss itself. One does better to confront a loss directly; ignoring it or wrapping

*it with platitudes may obviate the need for grief over the short term, but invites a problem with self-esteem over the long term."*²

May was a marvelous month at the cabin and we built a greenhouse around the garden with a screened roof so the rain could get through and I could garden bug-free. We worked the soil and got it ready for planting. An article appeared in the Ottawa Citizen which told of sisters reunited after fifty-one years. One of the sisters was told by her adoptive father that all records had been destroyed in a fire. I wonder if all adoptive parents read the same book.

The Bibliotheque Nationale sent copies of the Bell Canada Montreal Directory for 1982 and '83. In both years Dr. R. was listed but after that his name no longer appeared. They suggested I find a person in Montreal who could do research for me at the main library, where they had an index of the deaths of people in Quebec. They also sent a list of researchers, and I wrote to three of them, two answered. I wrote to Yves Decarie looking for Paulette Charron and Rebecca Hershorn, the name given to me by the doctor in B.C. She answered and asked for more information: date of their births, names of their spouses, if known, their religious denomination and any other details that could identify them specifically. Her fees were \$15/hour and I could limit her to a certain number of hours. I had nothing she needed. I called my cousins, Becky and Saul, to ask them about Rebecca Hershorn. They told me a Becky Hershorn, who was my grandmother's age, had come from Europe with my paternal grandparents, and she had two daughters, Lily and Ruthie. That was all they knew but suggested I call another cousin who had actually lived close to them in the 1920's. I also wrote to Lana Michaels at the Chevra Shaas Synagogue, where I had been named, as well as the synagogue my parents had attended, about Rebecca Hershorn, Lily and Ruthie's records.

I spoke to Valerie and my granddaughter a few times during the month. Caroline told her teacher at daycare about her vacation, about the bears and the ants, and her teacher said she was a very lucky little girl to have a grandma who lived such a different existence. Once again I felt special in my granddaughter's life.

In mid-June Valerie came to the house in Calgary while on a sales trip. We had dinner and talked endlessly about Caroline and how complete and meaningful her life had become since her daughter had entered the scene. I felt the same in the renaissance of our relationship. The next month Steve and I drove to the coast. We had lunch at the beach with Caroline while her parents were at work and spent evenings talking about their lives, Valerie's difficulties with her father and her husband's parents, and how easy she felt it was to be with us. I was pleased and we departed with mutual promises to visit again soon.

At the beginning of August, Susan's husband shocked us when he turned up at our cabin. Nobody ever stopped by. He asked if he could come in but said he would understand if we didn't want to open the door. He was working in Alberta, had the weekend off, had rented a car and set out to find us. It took him a few hours to locate our property, and we had to quickly adjust to having him here. I hadn't spoken to Susan in two years since the "will" incident.

We talked through dinner and well into the evening and I managed to express my feelings

about what they had done. He said they figured I would just deduct their loan from the inheritance check. I asked why she had lied about it. He didn't like the people whose advice she had asked but that was her business. He finally apologized, which I assumed was the reason for coming, and we made an attempt at being friends. He said his visit probably wouldn't change anything as far as his wife was concerned. I didn't expect it would although I didn't understand how it couldn't. Valerie was shocked to hear about his visit, as she hadn't spoken to Susan in a long time and wondered what was going on.

I wrote to the Court du Quebec, Chambre de la Jeunesse, for the Certificate of Judgment ("Adoption Order" in other provinces). Their answer: *"In response to your request, please be advised that the files respecting the adoption are confidential and no information contained in them may be revealed except as required by law, according to section IV, par 582 of the Civil Code of Quebec."* Such baloney!

All the kids came again for Thanksgiving. Caroline seemed unusually upset and it was easy to see that her mother and father were having a hard time. She just picked up their vibes. He complained about her and she about him and we knew it might be close to the end of their relationship. They left after three hectic days and we felt at a loss as to what, if anything, we could do.

That night about 2:00 a.m Thump! Thump! Thump! Though not yet asleep, we sat bolt upright in bed. That sound meant only one thing. A shadow passed the window. Steve reached for the shotgun, tiptoed to the kitchen window, quietly removed the screen, opened the window and fired in the other direction. The bear didn't move. I stomped on the floor, banged on the window pane and still nothing. Our hearts were pounding. We could have reached out and touched him. I thought it was a black bear but Steve saw that distinguishing hump and silver fur in the moonlight. It wasn't a black bear but a grizzly on our porch.

We had been lazy about the garbage, the little we had, after our company had gone and had left a small plastic bag with some scraps on the porch to be taken to the compost pile. As a last resort I banged two pots together. He paused, looked up, stepped through the screened partition of the porch as if it weren't there, and shuffled off towards the marsh. We were left peering into the darkness. It was too difficult to go back to sleep because of our excitement at having had a grizzly on our porch. Just five minutes before we heard him, Steve had gone out alone to pee in the woods. I didn't even want to think about that.

The next day we met our neighbors walking to the mail and recounted our adventure. They had a story too. The large heavy lock on their wellhouse door had been broken. They had also left some garbage out and the bag had been dragged along the driveway. They heard that a few miles down the road another neighbor had left something on her porch and when she opened her door, there was the bear rummaging around. All of us, normally very conscientious of keeping a clean camp, were reminded to do just that from now on. We were fortunate that nothing more aggressive had happened.

The summer before when we were living in the small cabin we awoke to see a black bear,

about two or three years old, circling the house. She looked in through the front windows, placing her paws on the pane. When we walked out onto the porch, she got up on her hind legs and stared at us staring at her. Steve had the shotgun ready but froze on the spot. As we looked into her brown eyes, we could see a soft, gentle soul looking back. He fired over her head. She dropped on all fours, turned slowly and shuffled off into the woods. The bear returned a few times but never stayed for long.

Bears have become an integral part of our lives. I love the fact that we live with them although I am terrified of an encounter, and before a hike in the parks I always ask about sightings. Back-country trails mean bears.



In the middle of the month a letter arrived from Le Directeur de L'Etat Civil of Quebec about the information I had sent on Rebecca Hershorn. It wasn't sufficient to process my request. I had to know her birth date, place of birth, and her father and mother. Of course I didn't have any of this information. If I did I probably could have found her myself.

I received a birthday card from Susan and my back went out. I spoke to Valerie for two hours trying to help her through her difficulties. Her husband had been laid up for some time because of a back injury. Because he wasn't working, she felt the weight of the world on her shoulders. Three days later she called and complained about Caroline being out of control. I explained to her that her daughter mirrored the tensions at home, and she should try to understand and be patient with her, to face her own problems, and not misplace her anger onto her daughter the way my mother had done to me and probably I to her. She and I talked a number of times during the next few weeks and by the end of the month things seemed a bit better.

It was October again and I wondered if my mother was thinking about me on my birthday. I hoped I would awake and have some kind of revelation but I slept well, no profound dreams, no news, nothing for another year.

BLACK MARKET BABY

✎ 1998 ✎

A letter from Lana Michaels, the secretary of the synagogue, informed me they had no information on Rebecca, Lily or Ruth Hershorn and suggested I write to the Canadian Jewish Congress.

An Esther Segal in Vancouver sent an email to Sharon Edelson in Ontario after joining Canadopt, a non-profit organization on the Internet politically pro-active in attempting to get Canadian laws changed to assist all people in the "adoption triad." Shortly after registering she was contacted by Sharon, Donna, and Sheri who noticed her Jewish name, city of birth and birth date. How amazing - things happened so fast!

This is Esther #1091 and Tammy #1097. Every day seems to bring another communication from a Jewish child horn at the Rahinovitch clinic. You are now the fourth person I have heard from. I spoke to a friend's mother here who knew Dr. R. in that era. She said if anyone was deeply involved in black market" or baby rings," it was him.

A day later I received a letter from Donna Roth, #98:

Some of you know me from Canadopt. I have noticed in the time I have been with this organization a number of adoptees have similar characteristics. We seem to share births in Montreal, Jewish surnames and birth dates within a span of ten years. If we could get a good number of adult adoptees to appeal to either government powers that he or the Montreal Gazette, we could open doors and possibly gain that long elusive information for which we all are searching. Let me know if you would like to be part of this. I have had contact with a Montreal reporter who expressed interest.

I responded saying I was definitely interested. Towards the end of the month a letter from Esther Segal arrived:

After receiving a copy of your letter to Sharon, I thought it was time to introduce myself. I am Esther Segal, living in Vancouver along with one of my oldest friends, Tammy Rosenblatt - alias Rahinovitch babies! I am not sure how much Sharon told you but I will give you a brief history and how we fit into the scheme of things.

Tammy was born in 1945 and I, in 1946. Her ninety-four year old adoptive dad told her he picked her up from Dr. R.'s clinic and took her home to Alberta. My parents, also desperate for a baby, went through the same procedure. Family stories confirm my parents paying \$10,000 for me; however, Tammy's father denies paying anything. She has been searching for years. I had no particular interest until health problems developed. She petitioned to have her file opened in the 1970's and when it came before Judge Melvyn Salmon, he said something like

"there's nothing here that would be of any use and I can't imagine why anyone would want to know this information." He probably either went to law school or synagogue with those mentioned in her file or had been involved in the black market himself! I have enclosed a copy of all my documents so you can compare them to yours. Tammy's are almost identical. Nothing is said about being born in Montreal but that we were "born" to our adoptive parents. Are yours similar?

I continued to "net" and came across the story of the "Butterbox Babies." Because my birth certificate showed no city of birth, I sent an e-mail to the address on the web-page and asked if there were records of all the babies born at the Ideal Maternity Home in Chester, Nova Scotia. A gentleman answered that the records had been destroyed and several of the survivors were adopted in Quebec and fighting earnestly to get access to their information. Joan Boyd from Quebec, who is searching and seems to have a lot of resources, is the eastern section head for Canadopt and the head of Parent Finders in Nova Scotia. However, she is not Jewish and does not share our background.

She sent me a story from the Montreal Gazette dated February 13, 1954. That was two weeks after joining Canadopt and having heard from all the other ladies. (Where are all the male Rahinovitch babies?)

Joan remains completely fascinated with our story and e-mails us when she finds any similarities to our cases. I realize the infamous Dr. R. was not mentioned in the 1954 Gazette article but Tammy and I both have "spies" in Montreal who are going to the Gazette to find further files pertaining either to the black market ring or Dr. R. We know a lady here, a friend of the Rahinovitches, who said he did things the way he wanted, made a lot of money, was always harassed by the authorities, but managed not to get arrested or shut down. He died a very rich man! She reminded us of how much the French hated the Jews, but found the Jewish community helpful in dealing with the over-abundance of French babies being born in the community and occasionally, within the Church. Sounds like real cooperation!

Sure would like to see you and all the rest - can't say that Tammy and I look particularly Jewish. My bets are on all of us being French-Canadian.

When I contacted Batshaw, Sylvia Kirstein told me that there were no records of my birth and it must have been a private adoption. How many of us come across her desk every year? Wonder how much she really knows! Let me know how a nice Eastern Jewish girl ended up in beautiful B.C. Hugs to a new adoptive sister! Sharon has registered you on canadopt.

Your birth buddy, Esther.

In the same package she sent Joan Boyd's response to her email:

Your story absolutely fascinates me. As more public awareness is realized, more "unknowns" come out of the woodwork. Not only did we have the horrendous story of the Butterbox Babies here in Nova Scotia, but these "baby markets" were everywhere, breeding on the

shame dictated by the social norms of the times and the desperation of infertile couples.

This is the article from the Montreal Gazette, February 13, 1954 that Joan sent to Esther:

An international ring dealing in black market babies has been using Montreal as its base of operations for ten years. Montreal lawyer Herman Buller was taken into custody at Dorval airport yesterday and arraigned before Judge Gerald Almond on two charges: "having falsified the entries into a birth certificate," and "giving counsel and advice in connection with an indictable offense." Bail was set at \$2000 and a preliminary hearing was fixed. Buller, thirty-three, and a member of the Montreal bar, pleaded not guilty to the charges. His lawyer told the judge he was shocked by the publicity given to this case. Mr. Buller was freed of a similar charge two years ago.

Evidence reveals that more than 1,000 babies born in Montreal have been sold illegally to families in the U.S. Most of the infants went to persons in New York, but others went to points as distant as Cleveland, Chicago and Florida. The price for the children ranged from \$2000 to \$3000. In some instances it was slightly higher because of added risks taken by members of the ring to deliver the infants. Most of the racket was based on the falsification of birth certificates, but in some cases infants were merely smuggled across the border without any documents. Police said that most of the children were of French-Canadian origin but were sold to Jewish families in the United States. This is in complete contradiction to Quebec adoption laws which state specifically that adoptions must be made by parents of the same religion as the child. Ernest A. Mitler, of the N.Y. district attorney's office said he has interviewed at least seventy persons in New York who have admitted "buying" babies in Montreal and that most of the families were unaware that they were doing anything illegal.

The ring is believed to have worked as follows: A family wishing to adopt a child in New York would contact a lawyer who would refer them to a Montreal source. The couple would come to Montreal and the financial details would be agreed upon. Then the ring would obtain a baby from an establishment for unwed mothers. In some cases the real mothers were given small amounts of money but in others the babies were merely taken without their consent and delivered to its destination in the U.S. usually in one of two ways. Either a girl courier literally smuggled the child across the border by "bluffing" her way past immigration authorities or the baby was provided with a visa and passport that had been obtained by falsification of names.

Maurice Duplessis, Premier of Quebec, said that he had been aware of a well-organized, international baby racket operating out of Montreal for some time and had personally sent two Crown prosecutors to New York to conduct interviews. The Montreal Council of Social Agencies said that they were not totally surprised by the ring, but the extent of the abuse was not suspected.

More arrests are expected in what official sources describe as a \$3,000,000 ring of doctors, lawyers, nurses, social workers and others. The work of the black market operators was so well worked out that some doctors and lawyers became innocent dupes in the transactions.

Perhaps the most shocking aspect of the case was the manner in which the ring preyed on the mothers of illegitimate babies. Hundreds of these unfortunate women became pawns of the organization simply because they did not know of anywhere else to turn. Montreal has long been the centre to which most unmarried mothers in the province came.

Members of the black market ring also took advantage of the laxness of border restrictions and used the sympathies of immigration authorities to deliver the children to the U.S. Another ploy used by the ring was to illegally obtain birth certificates. A woman would swear she was the mother of another woman's illegitimate child and obtain a birth certificate for it. The ring often used Jewish girls in the city to pose as mothers of the children. Then the birth certificate and the child were turned over to the ring and the baby was adopted by U.S. families through regular court procedures. Most of the babies went to Jewish families although they were of French-Canadian origin.

Another article: February 13, 1954, Montreal Gazette:

Washington: Attorney reveals how racket works: A community several hundred miles from New York, where a black market baby could be bought as "merchandise" for \$2000, was described to a U.S. Senate committee in testimony by the Assistant District Attorney of New York County. He did not identify the community further.

The \$2000 price quoted was for delivery at the unnamed community. For an additional \$500, door-to-door service at the buyer's home was available (in one instance by truck) or for still an additional \$1000, the prospective mother could be sent to New York where the child could be handed over at birth. The Assistant District Attorney testified that "any of us here" could make a telephone call "to one of several numbers" in this community, give name and wishes, and be told, "for \$2000 you may have the merchandise." Within a period of several weeks or months you will get a telephone call and be told to go to that community. There the child will be waiting for you, probably boarding out. You will pay \$2000. The child will then be transferred to you. In addition, professional intermediaries are utilized in the New York area who make contacts and receive a kick-back. Among the methods of covering up the transfers was the registration of a mother under the name of the adopting parents, so records show the foster mother herself delivered the child, or employment of another girl to get the birth certificate. The black market provides no investigation of foster parents who, in turn, are given no information on the background of a child file:

Esther also enclosed some articles from a Montreal newspaper microfiche

February 11, 1952:

City police will start rounding up 17 more suspects in connection with Montreal's million-dollar illegitimate baby racket. A doctor, a lawyer and another man have been arraigned in Criminal Court and are accused of conspiring to deprive mothers of their children and having carried out deprivations. Police said that at least two more doctors and two nurses are suspected of being members of the ring, involved with taking babies from unwed mothers here and selling them to people in Toronto and the U.S. for sums ranging from \$3000-\$5000.

February 26, 1953: Toronto:

A Brooklyn couple was charged with buying a baby for \$250 and trying to smuggle it in a meat basket across the border to be sold at a 400% profit. Police said their investigation was still continuing to determine whether the couple were misguided would-be parents or couriers for a black-market, babies-for-export ring that has been operating for at least three months at fantastic profits. The detective said the unmarried mother of the baby registered at St. Mary's Hospital under the name of the couple with a false Toronto address. The couple had applied earlier for a room after the doctor notified them of the approximate date of the birth and then paid the bill and took the baby away. As far as the hospital was concerned, the baby was born to the woman of the couple and the birth certificate was made out that way. The system used in getting the child is the same that was used in the Montreal baby racket ring last year strengthening investigators' theories that the ring was the same. Six branches of the law in Canada and the U.S. were racing to round up the rest of the suspects in the international gang.

February 28, 1953:

Police arrested a Toronto doctor and charged him with making a false statement in making out a birth certificate. His arrest was the third in three days.

February 19, 1954:

In Montreal two men and three women are under arrest for allegedly selling babies for up to \$10,000 each. Fifty New York couples were said to have bought babies from the ring since 1950.

December 6, 1955:

A New York woman detective today told how she paid \$2000 in marked money to a Montreal lawyer for arrangements to take over a child born to another woman. She posed as an American seeking to "buy" a baby here in February 1954. She and a Montreal policewoman went to a doctor's office on Mount Royal Avenue. She saw the child and lawyer and paid the \$2000 to arrange registration of the infant and another woman \$1000 in marked money for looking after it. She also paid \$50 to a rabbi for assisting in the birth registration. Following this the party proceeded to an address on Bellechasse Street where she was to have received the baby. Instead the police were waiting to make the arrest. A Montreal woman now living in the U.S. said she had given birth to a child out of wedlock and had been referred to a lawyer who arranged to have the child taken from her for adoption. Days later another woman came for her and the baby and they were taken to the Bellechasse Street house. The woman said that she signed a paper agreeing to the adoption, gave it to the lawyer, received no money but half her hospital bill and doctor's bills were paid.

December 7, 1955:

The rabbi involved in the signing of the registration papers with the lawyer and two women said that all details for the baby's registration had been given to him by one of the women. She had been introduced to him as being from New York and told him that her baby had been born while she was visiting friends just outside Montreal. The rabbi assured the Crown prosecutor

that there had been no previous arrangements between him and the lawyer concerning the adoption papers. The police said that the woman had been provided with marked money and when the lawyer had been arrested at the Bellechasse home where the baby had been kept, he found \$1000 of the money on the lawyer and the \$2000 of the money in his desk drawer in his office.

January 26, 1956:

A 64-year-old grandmother from Montreal was sentenced today on her conviction of conspiring to sell a baby to a childless couple here in New York and to arrange for adoption of a child without being an authorized agent. When she asked for leniency the Judge told her that she had been shown quite a bit of mercy. She had been trafficking in human beings.

June 22, 1964:

Provincial Police Director said today "rumors of a widespread baby-selling racket here probably are founded on outdated invalid information. These published reports - which reflect on our morality and on the efficiency of the QPP [Quebec Provincial Police] - apparently are based on 10-year-old information obtained by U.S. sources, and which may not be true today. As far as the QPP is concerned, we have no information, no complaints and no reports of the existence of a baby-selling racket in Montreal or elsewhere in the province. No investigation in connection with any phase of the rumored racket is underway now."

Shortly after Esther sent her package a letter from Donna Roth arrived saying she had twelve people who would authorize using their names on the letter she proposed to send to either government powers or the Montreal Gazette to "open doors." Some of the adoptees were planning to get together in Montreal sometime in the future. *"It might be as close to our roots as we get. After all, we have found each other."* Of course I gave my permission for my name to be included.

I received a letter from Yves Decarie saying she had found Rebecca Hershorn's husband's name, Isidor, from a list of residents on Henri Julien Street in 1929, the same information I had obtained from the Bibliotheque Nationale. She looked for an obituary for Isidor during the years 1929-1985 without success. I sent her a check for \$50 for her time.

Donna wrote to all of us that she had sent the letter stating our request for assistance to the Canadian Jewish Congress, Quebec Region, Jewish Family Services, Baron de Hirsch Institute and Jewish Federation, Combined Jewish Appeal with our names and the summary of the Montreal Gazette story about the baby-selling black market. Her letter read:

In addition to our births in Montreal, the significant connection has been our adoptive families, all of whom are Jewish. Other details are similar: Dr. Rabinovitch's Clinic, Dr. Wiseman, and Dr. Alton Gold bloom. Some of us share the same attorney or synagogue for registration of birth. Many of us have children and are concerned about relevant medical and biological information. Deeper than that is the human need and right to know about one's roots. At this time, we are choosing not to exercise our connections to the media. Given the current passion for investigative journalism, we are sure that this would make excellent grist for the

media mill. As much as we desire to get our information in a dignified way, we are resolute in our intentions.

Donna's letter ended with,

Let's keep our collective fingers crossed that we get a civil and compassionate response. If not, I am ready to go to the media and other sources to uncover the truth. Let me know if you still want to pursue this avenue. On a personal note, I feel blessed to have found all of you. Acutely aware that I may never find my birth parents/family, I consider you to be my soul family and I am truly fortunate."

Esther's answer to my letter:

I have just read the book *City Unique* by William Weintraub, a book about Montreal in the 1940's and '50's, very ripe for making babies with gambling, nightclubs, birth control banned by the church and the city full of Commonwealth soldiers involved in flying missions from Montreal Dorval Airport to England.

We are all hoping to get together in Montreal in May with a Gazette reporter and lawyer who has been successful in getting one file opened from Quebec City. That particular file yielded nothing concrete for the petitioner - under "parents" it said "abandoned." An eighty-two year old woman on the Canadopt network came forward a couple of weeks ago and told us her husband's aunt gave birth to a daughter in Dr. R.'s clinic in 1946. She checked into the clinic as Ethel Levine and didn't want to talk about her experiences. 1946 could cover about five lovely, middle-aged birth buddies! When she heard we had a reporter interested in doing our story, the woman asked if it is a French reporter writing for the Gazette? "No," said Esther, "Jewish writer." "She won't get very far," exclaimed the elderly woman; "To open up such a can of worms, especially if she mentions anything about the church, she'll hit a brick wall. Nobody will talk, for sure not the son. phineas did some terrible things but everybody should know how lucky they were to get adopted - some of those French families had no food. One man who worked for my husband had twenty children. Their own people, the government, especially Duplessis, were screwing them and blaming everything on the English and the Jews." Joan Boyd found her birth father in Montreal after seven years of searching.

I was shocked when Valerie told me that Susan couldn't have children. I remember an herbalist said that one of my kids might have trouble conceiving because of something in my genetics. Once again I felt helpless at not having any information about my past. How does a woman deal with the fact that she can't conceive? If she didn't want children, there was no problem. How could I help my daughter? I was deeply bothered and called Susan. Did she want children? We never even got to that. When I brought up adoption, she refused to consider it. "Look at you!" she said, and then mentioned a friend of hers who was adopted. "Never!" she snapped. Adoption wasn't an option and sounded almost indecent. I felt cold and empty and threatened by her determined refusal even to think about it. She just denied my whole existence, not unlike my denial of it. When I spoke to my naturopath, the first thing he asked was, "Is the guy a cyclist?" Her husband was. It seems many enthusiastic bikers have

had problems in this area. Maybe it was his problem, not her's.

Because I didn't have access to the internet at that time Sharon sent a message to Esther to tell me my Canadopt number was # 1210. I had all kinds of numbers but no names or ancestors. I mentioned to Esther that we should register in the French section of Canadopt since we might be French-Canadian and our mothers might look there. She thought it was a good idea.

On the same day I wrote to the Canadian Jewish Congress with Isidor Hershorn's name, looking for Lily and Ruth; to Parent Finders asking where to look for Isidor's family; to the Ministry of Health in Quebec City for my file number and to see if I was registered. The Ministry of Health returned my letter with my file number - another number!

A letter arrived from the Canadian Jewish Congress saying there was no information on Isidor, Rebecca, Lily or Ruth Hershorn. On the same day I received a response to Donna's letter from the Jewish Family Services explaining that they were active at one time in the field of adoption but that since 1993, with the implementation of Law 120, all adoption files and services were transferred to Batshaw under the supervision of Sylvia Kirstein. Some old closed files were archived in Ottawa at the National Archives. They were not in the possession of any of the information we were looking for.

Donna added as a postscript.

So, it looks like we'll go public. Some of us who are still interested will meet with Montreal Gazette staff and other media sources in mid-May to continue the search. Let me know if you are still in.

Pat Danielson from Parent Finders checked the births and marriages for Lily and Ruth Hershorn and found nothing. I wrote to the Quebec Regional Office, Health and Welfare Canada, Income Security Programs for the Hershorns saying I was looking for them. They replied that they would forward a letter.

Valerie and her family were planning to visit in April for Caroline's birthday. One week before the date, she canceled saying they were going skiing instead. I was stunned and upset but said nothing, feeling helpless and rejected. After two desperate days of trying to face my feelings, I called her back. She blamed me for her decision and when that didn't work, her husband and Steve for not getting along, except they had already straightened out their differences. It went from bad to worse until I realized that her father's influence was at the bottom of this. After a number of phone calls back and forth, she realized how upset I was and feebly changed her mind and after much deliberation, I canceled their visit. Too much had transpired of which I couldn't make heads or tails. She then admitted her lie. She wanted to stay on the coast because her father was going in for an operation. The truth would have been less painful, but when lying has become a way of life, veracity is not an option.

So I didn't get to see my granddaughter on her birthday, and life went on. I wrote Valerie a

nasty letter which she couldn't handle and our pattern persisted. I knew that until she made some attempt to deal with her father, nothing would change and her family would receive her misplaced anger. Elizabeth thought I should let her go. I did too. But how?

Esther wrote saying they had chosen the weekend prior to Mother's Day to meet in Montreal. They had an appointment with a Gazette reporter interested in doing an article and hoped to have a meeting with the lawyer who had previously had an adoption judgment reopened. She also said a woman who was adopted in 1935 told her she had once confronted Dr. R. in his office regarding her history. He pointed to a picture of his daughter on the wall saying, "*My own daughter was adopted; do you really think I would have kept the files?*" Because of the speed of email, which I still didn't have, the date chosen for the Montreal meeting had been set long before I found out - too close to the time I would have to leave. I wasn't prepared. I needed to find a place to stay where I could cook my own meals, and the airfare on such short notice was excessive. Esther said she and the other birth buddies would call at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday when they were all together and I promised to be up at the phone.

It was wonderful talking to everybody. One of the girls had been at the same camp I was at and she caught me up on where everybody was and what they were doing. The lawyer couldn't do anything to help, and what came out of the visit was this article spread across the front page of the Montreal Gazette, May 1988, with pictures as well.

BLACK-MARKET BABIES SEEK MONTREAL ROOTS

Hundreds of Quebec-born babies were sold to childless couples across North America as part of a clandestine "baby business" that flourished in Montreal in the 1940's and '50's.

Raised by an Edmonton couple who adopted her in Montreal as an infant, Esther Segal has found out that she came with a \$10,000 price tag attached; that her Jewish roots might be a lie; and that her birth records, if they exist, are probably sealed forever. Segal and other women from across North America gathered in Montreal to shed light on a fascinating and bizarre episode of the city's past.

It hinged on a \$3-million illicit-baby ring, and it was all vividly recorded in the newspapers at the time. Behind the sensational accounts lay a more complex story. Adopting a child of another religion in Quebec was against the law, so schemes were devised to let non-Jewish children become Jewish on paper. The system worked because it met many people's purposes. On one side were unwed mothers shamed into surrendering their babies and on the other, desperate couples willing to pay for them. In between were people willing to exploit both sides for cash. It is a story of deception and subterfuge, and the secrets were locked away for years. But now Segal and her fellow adoptees want the story told.

Newspapers at the time reported that more than 1,000 babies born in Montreal in the '40's and '50's were sold to families in Canada and the United States. Lawyers falsified birth certificates, Jewish women gave their names to French- Canadian babies and children were smuggled across the U.S. border: "Mothers Were Shamed Into Silence; Couples Paid Thousands."

Montreal was crawling with baby "mills" - homes for unwed mothers - where women "in trouble" could turn to in exchange for signing over their babies for adoption right after birth. There were even accounts of thugs kidnaping babies from rival homes.

One woman was photographed outside her flat on Laval Street and said she had done nothing wrong at her home for unwed mothers. "All I ever did was help unfortunate girls and find nice babies for nice people," she told a Gazette reporter in 1955. And lawyers always got their "cut."

Central to the operation were Quebec laws stipulating that parents could only adopt children of their religion. At the time, many Jewish couples were eager to adopt children, but few Jewish babies were available. So couples paid \$3,000 to \$10,000 for a child, according to evidence cited at the time, and the children were spirited to points outside Quebec, or south of the border, where waiting lists for adopting babies were long. Though most of the babies were born to French-

Canadian women, the couples were told the children were Jewish. Segal said her parents traveled from Edmonton to Montreal "because it was the only place you could get Jewish babies."

Donna Roth grew up in a Jewish household in Michigan. She, too, was told that her mother

went to Montreal in 1946 and adopted her from a Jewish mother. Roth always believed it, but everyone who met her said she looked Irish or French.

In Ottawa, Sharon Edelson asked her adoptive mother about her roots. Her mother had also traveled to Montreal to adopt her in the 1940's; she, too, was told her birth mother was Jewish.

One Ottawa woman, now 85, who did not want her name published, said she and her husband approached a Montreal doctor in the 1940s "because we knew he had children for adoption. One day, the doctor called us to say the baby was being born," recalled the woman. To the woman's astonishment, the doctor offered the couple the baby only hours after its birth. As desperate as she was for a child, she felt that was wrong. "You don't take a 4-hour-old baby home," the woman said. She insisted on waiting overnight, then took the baby back by train the next day - no questions asked. "I don't know if it was legal," the woman said. "This doctor had babies, and I assume he got money for them."

By the mid-fifties, the baby ring appeared to have broken up and publicity about it faded.

Pat Danielson, head of the Montreal chapter of Parent Finders, estimates that in three years she has fielded calls from 150 adoptees across the country who have similar stories linking them to Montreal. The adoptees were all born in the city in the 1940's and '50's and were all adopted into Jewish homes. They went through private adoptions that left few records, though many have birth records issued by Montreal synagogues. And in many cases money changed hands.

"One (adoptive) father called, and I openly asked him if he was from the black-market days?" Danielson said. And he said, "Oh yes, we wanted a child, and in our community we knew where to go." He was very honest about it; he said that he paid money. "This was the only way couples knew to get a baby. It was a business, a baby business. I don't know who was making money off it - the doctors or lawyers or both - but these parents were paying money to somebody."

In some cases, doctors "brokered" adoptions legitimately and in good faith, and the money that changed hands was merely enough to cover the birth mother's medical expenses. But in other cases, the money amounted to a small fortune.

Legitimate social-service agencies did oversee adoptions in Montreal at the time. But they weren't allowed to carry out adoptions across religious lines, and could refuse if the couple were considered too old - in those days, in their forties.

So, many couples turned to private adoptions that left fewer traces. The problem was that the transaction omitted so much. The child was handed over like a new appliance, with nothing about his or her background, such as the medical history of the birth mother. On the other side, little was known about the adopting couples. Unless follow-up checks were made, children were at the mercy of couples, good or bad, who paid for them.

Adoptees like Segal say they grew up in loving, supportive families. But it's as if part of their lives is missing. They have asked a lawyer to see whether the courts will open their original birth records. But they have been told judges won't open sealed birth records unless it's a life-and-death situation. Even if they succeeded, they would probably find little information. It was in the interest of those in the baby racket to keep information scarce.

Donna Roth hired a lawyer in Michigan who requested birth and adoption records from Quebec courts; "He has not even received a response," she said, "it's all so clandestine."

The adoptees may never discover the whole truth about what went on in Montreal in the 1940's and '50's, but perhaps they can unearth some secrets about themselves.

Thirty-three year-old Andre Desaulniers had started in 1991 by contacting Quebec's justice minister Paul Began and has kept up a steady pressure ever since by relentlessly petitioning the government to have an open-file policy. Having learned about his adoption when he was eighteen, after his adoptive parents died, he has spent almost two decades researching the status of adoptees across Canada and in other countries. He became most intrigued by what New Zealand and British Columbia have done.

The B.C. law, which has featured open adoption files since 1996, is an adaptation of the New Zealand one which contains a veto for the birth mother. Only an average of 3.2% of birth mothers have ever used the veto. In 1995 Desaulniers began aggressively campaigning for the Quebec government to consider adoption-law reforms, adapted from the B.C. model, that would result in open files. This is revolutionary news for the province's 300,000 adoptees, 100,000 of whom were never legally adopted by anyone after being given up.



Two days later Esther sent this story off the internet. There were more than a few girls whose babies were fathered by their Jewish boyfriends, helped by the "Grey Nuns:"

In 1959 Eileen, a new immigrant from Ireland, was looking for a place to have her wedding reception. Because she didn't know many people, she went to the priest of St. Kevin's Church in Montreal who indicated the Grey Nuns on Dorchester Street had a room which would be suitable. Eileen's mother was visiting from Ireland for the wedding. One of the nuns asked Eileen if her mother would do a great favor by taking a male baby named Danny to a couple in Ireland (the nuns wanted to get the baby out of the country as soon as possible). The story was that there was an Irish girl, a new immigrant, who had been forced to have sex with men for the purpose of having children. The young ladies like her usually had no relatives and were locked up in a brothel situation in the Eastern Townships. According to the nuns, the man who had fathered the child felt guilty and told the girl he would pay for the baby and give it to her. She came to the nuns and asked to have the baby sent to her parents in Ireland. Eileen's mother agreed. The nuns said not to worry about papers, they would take care of everything. Eileen picked up the three-week-old baby from the nuns late at night and her mother was given a sealed envelope which the nuns said if she was questioned, to give to the authorities.

Eileen's mother was met at the Dublin airport by two people who asked "Is this our Danny?" Eileen's mother was not paid for taking the baby to Ireland and Eileen was told not to mention it to anyone. As a matter of interest the priest left the priesthood. Eileen has always been suspicious of what the nuns had told her.

A few days after Donna and Sharon appeared on Montreal AM CBC, an eighty- year-old Jewish man was interviewed. He showed the house on Laval Street where he had picked up his daughter. Also interviewed was a fifty-year-old French man who lived across the street and had lived there all his life. As a child he was afraid to go near the house where the babies were picked up as he was told that he, too, might be sold like the children in that house.

In June I received a letter from Valerie apologizing for the mess she had caused. Three weeks later she called Elizabeth and they argued because Valerie was saying things about me Elizabeth couldn't take and Valerie hung up. I received another letter from Valerie. A week later I spoke to her in an attempt to straighten out what was going on. She tried to disavow her actions and I couldn't deal with her lies, blame and blind allegiance to her father. Our relationship was suffering because he was jealous of my association with our granddaughter and complained that Valerie never left the baby with him. She didn't, because he was too loud and overbearing and Caroline wasn't comfortable. I guess he put up enough of a fuss because subsequently I began to see less of my granddaughter.

I saw a hypnotherapist in Calgary hoping she could get me back to my child- hood. Her office felt terribly claustrophobic and she was not adverse to meeting me at my house an hour later. The session took ninety minutes, and rather than hypnotizing me, she took me into a deep trance which was partially effective but a little disappointing. She told me what I hated most about the adoption were the lies, that I felt betrayed. There was no trust in my adoptive parents' relationship. I felt that I could forgive my birth mother because she had no choice; her family didn't want her to keep her baby; my birth father wasn't able to make the commitment; and my adoptive mother couldn't handle the situation. I didn't resent her as much as I used to, given the circumstances, and I thought I could forgive her now. I believed this whole issue had been pushed on my Ma by my adoptive father, whom I resented. He set my mother and me against one another letting us fight all the time, while he was free to keep doing what he was doing. She couldn't take it out on him so she aimed all her frustrations at me and he didn't stop it. He wouldn't tell me the truth. I wasn't sure if he knew anything but because the story changed so many times, I believe he did.

Who am I? I am a little girl who likes to play in the sun. There are trees and birds around. I have curly hair with bow knots in it. I like to dance. I really like to dance. This is what I remembered from the session (which was not tape recorded like all the others). I did release some deep emotions, and if I never get any concrete answers, I am finally dealing with my adoption. The layers are peeling off slowly, ever so slowly.

BEARS AND BEARS AND MORE BEARS

✧ EGYPT LAKE, August 1998 ✧

The skies had been clear for weeks but when Elizabeth and I left at 8:00 a.m. it was foggy. A light drizzle turned to steady rain after Lake Louise and as we neared the Sunshine Area turnoff, voluminous white clouds allowed brief glimpses of blue. At the trailhead a park employee cheerfully told us about a bear that had been seen on Healy Pass where we were headed. She wished us luck and hoped we caught a glimpse of him.

We had decided to spend a few days at Egypt Lake, one of the most beautiful and popular areas in Banff National Park. The trail gradually ascended the Healy Creek Valley through dense Engelmann spruce and alpine fir and after four miles of steady uphill hiking, we saw scattered earth piles in the meadows where the bear had been digging for roots. The last alpine larches were left behind as we reached 7,650' Healy Pass at 5.7 miles, and an unforgettable view of 9,376' Mt. Bourgeau, 11,578' Mt. Assiniboine, 9,293' Monarch and the long ridge extending from its flanks to Healy Pass known as the Monarch Ramparts. West of the Pass, the flat steel-blue contoured cutouts of Egypt and Scarab Lakes were nestled in the forested valley beneath the Pharaoh Peaks. We dropped our packs and enjoyed lunch lost in a landscape of shadows and shapes. A passing warden informed us the grizzly was around, had followed some hikers, but hadn't bothered anybody yet. I brought out my bear bell! The trail dropped rapidly until we reached the campground. After checking the empty sites, we picked the last one, set up our tent, stashed our stuff, and hung our food on the high bear bars, an ingenious device that had a number of cables onto which you could clip your food bag and hoist it about twenty feet, well out of reach of mountain marauders. After filling our containers with water from the creek below, we cooked dinner just as it started to drizzle. Here we were again, by ourselves, together, catching up on mother-daughter stuff we didn't deal with down below in our preoccupied society of survival.

A shelter cabin built in 1969 that could sleep sixteen backpackers was located in the middle of the campground and I thought how safe I would feel sleeping there, although I didn't really like being indoors in the wilderness. The wind, rain, and night noises are soothing, although the hoarse snorting of a grizzly wasn't. We retired early and relaxed as a light rain lulled us to sleep.

A cold morning was alleviated with a breakfast of hot oatmeal and a climb up the steep, difficult switchbacks to the cirques above Egypt Lake. We passed Scarab Lake and continued through light hail, scrambling up a rocky track towards Mummy Lake, rimmed by tundra and talus. We sought cover under a tree and had lunch while snow fell around us. On our way back, a rocky gorge overhanging Egypt Lake sheltered us from the wind so we could enjoy our homemade oat bars and watch cloud shadows crawl over a treed landscape. We bushwhacked down to the lake, ready for a dinner of quinoa, vegetables and lentils, and then walked to the shelter cabin and, sitting by the wood stove, talked to a young French couple

who were hitchhiking across Canada.

In the early morning hours of our third day, the wind rose and picked up in volume as the sun filtered through the trees, creating an evergreen pattern on the tent. I meditated. It was cloudy and cold when I finally got the courage to slip out of my comfortable cocoon and look outside. After cooking breakfast and warming up in the shelter, we left for a fifteen-mile loop up Whistling Valley, a staggering gap between the Pharaoh Peaks and the precipitous slopes of the Great Divide to Shadow Lake and back along the creek.

We climbed the switchbacks again and continued the steady ascent to rugged, rocky Whistling Pass, where marmots whistled their warnings to passersby. In the distance heavenly Haiduk Lake nestled in the dell far below the cliffs of the Ball Range. The steep trail twisted down to marshy meadows alongside the lake and then quite steeply through subalpine forest to Shadow Lake below. A light rain continued as we hiked the muddy path to the backcountry lodge and ate our lunch on the porch. We returned to Egypt Lake at 6:30 p.m. and were able to dry our boots by the wood stove after dinner. It suddenly turned very cold and we decided to remain in the cabin that night. After hot tea we climbed into bed, a plywood platform much less comfortable than the ground. At either end of the main room that housed the stove, tables and benches, there were two smaller chambers, each with four bunks, upper and lower. We were lucky to have one of these rooms to ourselves until six in the morning when a cold camper stumbled into the cabin.

Elizabeth and I got up to pee, started a fire in the stove, and quickly got back into our bags - a soft thank you from one of the sleepy occupants in the end room floated out to our ears.

After breakfast we hiked the short but steep few miles to Pharaoh and Black Rock Lakes. Finding Sphinx Lake proved impossible and we returned to Black Rock for lunch in the sun. A hiker passed by also unable to find the lake. Back at the shelter the warden ticketed us for having spent the night inside, \$5 each, cheap lodgings but then they were far from luxurious. We left for our cold tent under clear skies and Elizabeth fell asleep quickly while I listened to the outside.

It was very cold during the night. Towards morning as black turned to grey, I awoke to the sound of footsteps and froze in my bag. It was a long few seconds before I realized that somebody was packing up to leave early. We enjoyed tea and oat squares on the cabin steps in hot sun while our tent fly dried. Everybody who was walking out that day had already left. Just before 10:00 a.m. we started the two-mile climb to Healy Pass, which took just under an hour. The rest of the hike was downhill, dry and refreshing, and arriving at the bottom at 1:30 p.m., we soaked our sore feet in the creek while waiting for Steve. He and Elizabeth went on to Calgary and I returned to our cabin. Valerie and her family were coming the next day and because of all the recent arguing and confusion, Elizabeth and Steve didn't want any part of their visit. I guess a mother will put up with anything.

Still on a high from our hike, I stayed up until 4:00 a.m. cooking, cleaning and preparing for their arrival. I was excited but anxious, knowing it would be strange for them to find just me at

the house. Much to my surprise, they arrived early in the morning, having slept in their car on the way. Shocked and suspicious, they couldn't understand why Steve and Elizabeth weren't also there to greet them. I tried to explain that it was because of her recent behavior but Valerie couldn't seem to understand. Most people don't do what they want but what is expected. Not Steve and Elizabeth. It was somewhat upsetting not to have them with me for this family visit, but as a mother I felt differently about seeing my kids - no matter what.

The weather was beautiful and we were able to spend the next day by the creek where an enjoyable mud fight left us covered from head to toe. We warmed water on the stove for a bath that night. Valerie and her husband left for home on Sunday leaving Caroline, now four years old, with me for the week. We slept together, talked from morning to night, finished a whole quart of yogurt while sitting at the kitchen table gabbing about girlfriends, played in the creek, made clothespin dolls, baked cookies, colored, painted, and bottled sour dill pickles. She scrubbed a box of pickling cucumbers, stuffed them into jars and added the salt, while I poured boiling water over them. I loved being with her. It brought back those early days when Valerie was little and we were alone together.

Even though feelings of impatience arose when she wanted to do something other than what I had planned, I realized my feelings were from old pictures of my mother and me and I found it easy to change. I missed doing my writing, not being used to setting my needs aside anymore, but I had decided to give this time to her. I loved this little being, so innovative and unfettered. Steve and Elizabeth returned a few days later and at the end of the week, Caroline and I left for Kelowna to meet her mother. I was terribly disappointed when we arrived at the campground just outside town, having brought a tent and camping gear, to find it full. When Caroline saw how disheartened I was, she said she didn't mind staying at a motel. I was surprised at her sensitivity and relieved at her ability to adapt so easily to changed plans. After shopping at the health food store, we found a place with a pool she thought was beautiful, swam until our skin wrinkled like prunes, and after supper, went to meet her mother who had flown in from the coast. The next day I dropped them off at the airport and drove back to the cabin alone. A week with my granddaughter left me tired, ready to get back to my work, and completely in love with a little girl who reminded me so much of her mother as a child.



Elizabeth wanted to "get away from it all," and so had found a job cooking at a lodge in the Purcell Peaks, remote enough that it required her to be helicoptered in. I never needed much of an excuse to go for a hike in the wilderness, even though we already lived in what most people would call wilderness - a log cabin on eighty acres, off-grid, was not exactly city living. But there was something about walking into the mountains carrying all you need for a few days in paradise.

She had always wanted to hike into the Tonquin Valley in Jasper National Park and see the Ramparts. The only thing that kept me out of that park was its notorious reputation for grizzlies.

With the crowds and heat of summer past, we packed up on September 7th, left Steve in

Calgary, and headed west to Lake Louise, where we picked up the Ice fields Parkway, one of the most majestic drives in the world, heading north to Jasper. At Saskatchewan Crossing a smoky haze in the direction we were heading caused some concern. At the Columbia Ice field, the largest chain of ice fields along the divide and the origin of many mighty rivers that run to the Pacific, the Canadian prairies and the Arctic Ocean, we stopped to ask about fires. Two, both west of Jasper, were causing the fog, depending on which way the wind was blowing. I asked my perpetual question about bears. "There have been numerous bluff charges by grizzlies in the Tonquin Valley but no encounters. You might want to change your plans," said the park attendant. I took a deep breath and looked at Elizabeth. She didn't care but knew I did. "We can always go somewhere else, Mal"

My fear of bears took second place to my need to please my youngest daughter. All she had talked about were the Ramparts and that's where we were going, bears or no bears. We had been hiking in bear country for twenty years. Why should this be any different? The town of Jasper was bustling with tourists at 4:00 p.m. There was a grizzly warning but bluff charges in the Tonquin Valley were unheard of. "After all, we're the ones who would know," said this self-important park attendant. With four campgrounds to pick from, the Clitheroe site was recommended as "the best of the bunch" and we reserved it for two nights. Since we needed lodging for that night and couldn't book anything without a credit card, the manager of the Edith Clavell Hostel promised to hold two bunks until 6:00 p.m., which gave us forty minutes for some quick grocery shopping and the twenty-nine kilometer drive to the hostel, fourteen of them up a rough, narrow, switchbacked road. At one minute to six we pulled into the parking lot and found that nobody had called ahead to hold our spot. However, this place was anything but full. The manager, a retired French-Canadian from Quebec, showed us around and explained how things worked - the recycling bins, where to dump dishwater, drinking water had to be boiled, fridge protocol and which outhouse was off-limits. The sewage was supposed to have been picked up that afternoon and because the crew had still not appeared, he apologized for the smell and boasted about running a clean place, "the best in the Rockies." I knew that meant trouble. "No bears have ever come around," he said. They probably couldn't stand the smell.

The ladies' dorm with eight bunks was inhabited by an elderly man who had slept in it the night before with his wife since there was nobody else there. But now there were other women in the building and still he hadn't been asked to move to the men's dorm. Our host couldn't explain why when we asked. Elizabeth and I chose our bunks, transferred our packs to the dorm because the stench in the parking lot made it impossible to unpack in the car, and brought our food into the kitchen to start dinner. There was a strange feeling about the place and we would have eaten outside at one of the picnic tables but for the smell. Two elderly women prepared dinner while their husbands complained about having to help. One of the men left the door open every time he entered or left, which caused the smell to permeate the inside. I finally got up and slammed the door shut but nobody noticed. A family of six waited while the woman of the group prepared the food. Nobody helped as she walked around the table making sure everything was in place. A young man who had been reading outside secured a corner of the floor and kept reading. A totally incongruous group and we ate among strangers. After dinner we cleaned up, labeled and dated our food bags, and placed

them in the already-crowded fridge, most of the room taken up with beer and wine. Deciding a short hike was essential rather than hanging around until dark, we drove two kilometers to the end of the road and walked up to the glacier and ice caves under Mt. Edith Clavell's spectacular north face. It was dusk when we returned, arranged our bunks for the night and sat outside at a blazing bonfire, talking for an hour or so with a German family whose offer of marshmallows we declined. They came from a tiny village on the German-Swiss-Austrian border, had lived there all their lives, and were visiting the parks in British Columbia. They remarked on how many Germans they had met during their travels in Canada. We were looking forward to an uninterrupted and comfortable night's sleep, neither of which we got. The man in the far bunk snored all night, the lady near him tossed and turned on a noisy plastic mattress cover and the young girl at the other end kept turning on her light to check the time. Elizabeth had stayed in many hostels around the world and said this was the worst. It was my first.

The sky was clear but when I went outside to pee at 2:00 a.m., there were a few clouds around the peaks; at 5:00 a.m., it was overcast; and at 7:00 a.m., it was raining lightly. A faint feeling of relief. I wouldn't have to face any bears. We dressed quickly, quietly packed and started breakfast. I used the hostel's cell phone to call for the weather forecast: 60% chance of rain with afternoon thundershowers today; 40% chance for the next two days. I didn't want to walk seventeen kilometers into grizzly country in the rain, and Elizabeth had to struggle to put up with me. She let me do my thing to get through my fear and my luxurious illusions which involved a drive back to town to try and change our plans. By the time we got to Jasper the sun was out. The attendant suggested another hike but we didn't want to pay a penalty in order to change reservations. She said she'd forgo it; how commendable for a government employee to come to such a decision on her own. We sat on the front steps of the building to discuss our dilemma. Because of a high pass and the inclement weather, the Skyline Trail was not a good compromise. I decided the grizzlies over the high trail were the lesser of two evils and we drove back. Elizabeth was very patient, so sensitive. That's why these trips were comfortable and necessary, a reciprocity in our relationship.

Warned about the five kilometers of strenuous switchbacks at the end of the hike, we stripped our packs down to the barest essentials and finally started the seventeen kilometer walk, having already lost two hours. She didn't chide me but was glad to get going. We were headed for the high country where the air was crisp and clear, the wildflowers, what was left of them, brilliant; and a feeling of grandeur enhanced pristine peaks and expansive valleys. The first eight kilometers, a long gradual descent along the forested north slope of Mt. Edith Clavell, were easy. We walked along the Astoria River most of the way, the express route to the Tonquin Valley, and passed two couples with their bells ringing, both of whom had not seen a bear. I let my bell ring even though it bothered Elizabeth, who had the wonderful capacity to walk in bear country without a worry. I didn't. In fact that was all I thought about.

The switchbacks up Old Horn Mountain weren't too steep, and we were surprised to reach the top so quickly. The Amethyst Lakes at the base of the Ramparts, a 3000' wall of Precambrian quartz sandstone making up ten spectacular castellated peaks, reminded us of Titcomb Basin in the Wind Rivers. The feeling of being on the roof of the world permeated places like these,

and the excitement sent my blood rushing and made my head light.

It took three more long kilometers to reach the campground, only to find it in dense forest and far from the lake with no water nearby. We walked all the sites looking for a room with a view, promised by the park attendant, but there were none. I found it hard to believe that it was two more kilometers down to the lake for water and then back up again. We bitched and moaned while setting up camp and hanging our food, and decided to hike the one kilometer to the warden's cabin. Trish, the warden, was surprised to hear we hadn't been told that water was 300 meters north of the campground. However, she advised there was another site in the middle of the valley we might prefer, and she suggested we walk only one more kilometer to check it out before she called to change our reservations. Surprise Point was made to order. Trish radioed headquarters and found we could have it for the next two nights. We struck camp and walked the last two kilometers of the day to our new quarters, adding another six to our seventeen, a long day with a full pack. At fifty-seven I couldn't carry what I used to when I was forty-two.

We ate dinner watching the clouds sink into the canyons. After hanging our food, we dressed warmly and hiked to the lakeshore where I sketched the valley until the light faded. Our tent was familiar, a home away from home, and I arranged my interior side pocket with everything I needed for the long night ahead. I suddenly realized as I wrote in my journal that Steve's birthday was Friday, three days from now. We decided to walk out on Thursday to be in time for a Friday Indian buffet at our favorite restaurant.

Elizabeth had wanted to do this trip because she had something on her mind and though physically exhausted, we talked for hours into the night. She said we pretend a lot. We don't really talk and it distressed her. She wanted a good relationship with me and felt we didn't have one and hadn't for a long time. Oh, God! What now? She was the closest of my three daughters and I needed a moment to consider this development. Anything to take my mind off bears.

She said I treated her like a child, asking her things to which I knew the answers. I guess I did it when I had nothing to say and felt the need to communicate. I was still mothering her; she was thirty years old, and it made her angry and short with me. I, in turn, became insecure, feeling rejected by her, probably an established pattern from my mother and me. We both wanted to be friends but this behavior got in the way. I cried a bit while talking about her sisters. She thought I had to let them go. So did Papa Henry. So did I. But how?

It was after midnight when she fell asleep. I loved to lie in our tent under a soft drizzle while raindrops landed gently on the nylon rain fly, sounding like a needle pricking a taut piece of fabric. At 4:30 a.m. I awoke to two grunts. I waited without breathing, not moving. A third grunt. I froze, not wanting the rustle of the sleeping bag to whisper a warning. I must have dozed because it was suddenly 8:45 a.m., and I realized it had stopped raining. I opened the tent fly to see the mountains draped in white and the valley floor glistening wet.

We put on every piece of clothing we had brought and went to get our food. As we released the

cables a motion in the far meadow caught our eyes. It moved like a moose but didn't have that distinctive profile. Trish had told us of a herd of upland caribou that roamed the valley. Maybe the grunts were theirs. Sure they were.

Elizabeth made some tea and we sat in the sun to get warm, gazing at our surroundings. Back at the tent, still in shadow, we climbed into our sleeping bags and while listening to the roar of cracking ice high in the crevices of glaciers and tumbling rocks, she read me some of her poetry. Such depths of despair. Does she suffer so? Was this my daughter? I felt guilty but denied it because it would be too hard to live with. Her life was her responsibility, but the divorce was mine. This hyper-sensitive being wasn't as happy as I would have liked her to be. Was I? I was when walking in the mountains. I was sure my love for the alpine environment must be reminiscent of my family of origin.

Realizing how tired we were from our long walk the day before, we scrapped plans to walk into the Eremite Valley and instead spent a leisurely day hiking around the lakes. The clouds were building around the peaks, slowly crawling into the valley, and I knew we were in for another cold night. Without enough sun to be comfortable, we returned to a warm tent. It was drizzling lightly while Elizabeth slept and I thought about Steve, looking forward to our walk out tomorrow. The weather wasn't promising and I was glad we weren't staying longer.

Without a book I had my thoughts to ponder. I had always assumed that most of my life had been happy, but now I wondered. Denial is a great mechanism and can lead one to believe anything. How many moments in our lifetimes were really filled with pure happiness? Why didn't it last? The Buddha said the essence of life was suffering and a well-disciplined mind brought happiness. Meditation was intended to purify the mind and so I planned to go on a silent retreat for a week of meditation and yoga. Elizabeth would be cooking for the group, as she had done for the past two years, and said it would do me good. If I dyed my hair and used wrinkle-free creams, I would say my age bothered me. It did to some extent but I would rather watch it creep up than be surprised one day at my greying roots and loose skin. I didn't feel I had contributed much to mankind. In my art - maybe some. Had my adoption been a cause of suffering to me? I didn't know. How could I tell?

During the night I could hear the wind in the peaks leaving the trees and tent undisturbed. The man in the next tent snored for a few hours and I found it comforting, thinking it would keep the bears away. When I awoke it was very cold. Someone was scurrying around outside taking pictures of the alpenglow on the Ramparts. Elizabeth started some tea while I struck camp. We were on our way at 9:00 a.m. Walking south on a rough, rocky trail, we descended the two kilometers to the head of Eremite Valley and stopped for water and some almonds while I sketched a large beautiful mushroom at the side of the path.

It was six and a half kilometers to the log bridge that crossed the Astoria River, where we stopped for lunch, and another eight to the car. We heard bells, heralding the approach of hikers. I had put my bells away until Elizabeth heard a loud crack in the woods. Clavell Lake marked the end of our journey and a dunk in its frigid water left her breathless. We climbed the bank to the car and drove back to Jasper for some gas and a cold beer, feeling closer than we

had before. That's what our walks were all about. I called Steve to say we were on our way; we'd be home in time to celebrate his birthday.

VIPASSANA MEDITATION RETREAT

1998

It snowed in the morning but cleared by the time Elizabeth and I left Calgary at 12:30 p.m. The radio warned of an icy drizzle, however the roads were dry. I was looking forward to time alone; although I wasn't sure what to expect, I was ready for an adventure. Not being used to crowds anymore, I wondered how I would fare. She convinced me by saying, "Don't worry about talking to anyone. It's a silent retreat. You don't have to socialize."

Since Elizabeth was the cook, she wanted to arrive with enough time to set up the kitchen and prepare dinner for twenty people. This was her third retreat for Shirley, the leader of this event. Elizabeth was looking forward to some quiet hours but especially to a trip to Maui for a month in the sun when it was over. We unloaded pots and pans, groceries and our belongings from her Honda Civic, which was crammed full, and I helped her organize the kitchen, then transferred our things to our room, the first in the long hallway of the dormitory. People arrived throughout the afternoon. Dinner was ready at 5:30 p.m.

Shirley introduced Elizabeth to the group and she explained the dishes - zucchini pie, vegetable chowder, salad with a French or vinaigrette dressing, flax rolls and raw butter. Everything was organic, which made me happy, and I had two portions of phenomenal food while talking with the people at my table, most of whom had been to a retreat before. The man next to me said he saw where my daughter got her good looks which made me uncomfortable, but I thanked him anyway for the compliment. He also left his soup bowl on the table and his chair out when he walked away. Not a mindful thing to do but we were here to learn about mindfulness. How mindful was I?

After dinner we gathered in the living room, a spacious area with three couches facing a freestanding fireplace, full-length windows all around, and a small couch and two chairs in the corner for intimate conversation. Shirley asked us to introduce ourselves and that familiar frightening feeling welled up in me when I was confronted with having to talk about myself in a group. I was shy, easily embarrassed, prone to feelings of intimidation, but was given a way out. Shirley talked about Elizabeth, said I was her mother, and we had written a cookbook together. When it came around to me, I said, "I guess my claim to fame is being Elizabeth's mother," at which everybody laughed. I added that I had meditated off and on for five years, more off than on, and said I'd like to be able to do it more often. I was relieved when the attention of the group turned to the next person. Shirley explained the rules and the schedule of events, and then we retired to the meditation building about fifty yards away. The six-day silence had begun.

Most of the participants had their spots picked out. I chose an empty area at the back of the room where I placed my pillow while everybody else was pretty much decked out with either meditation stools or special cushions. Shirley and Anne, her helper, sat facing us, each on one

side of a low, small table that held incense, a vase of yellow and red carnations to show the impermanence of things, Tibetan bells, and a small statue of the Buddha. She asked us to settle down, backs straight, shoulders down, head supported well, eyes focused four feet in front, drop our lids, relax our jaws, take three deep breaths and feel the rising and falling of our abdomens. She began with a loving kindness meditation. We were to picture a lotus in our heart chakra, open it petal by petal and see a light that would infuse our chest area and spread through our bodies, then spread to the other people in the room, to our parents, families, friends, people we felt neutral about, to those with whom we had problems, to the rest of Canada, the world, the planet, the universe and all the universes ... loving kindness to all (repeated three times), may all be well and happy (repeated three times), and then draw the light back to ourselves into the open lotus and close the petals. The end of the half-hour was signaled by the tinkle of Tibetan bells, and we walked mindfully back to the main building under a starry sky.

I had a cup of tea in front of the crackling fire and because silence had begun, wrote a note to Shirley asking where I could do some yoga. Any questions were to be written on pieces of paper provided and dropped into a small basket. In the evening talk she would give her answers to the group. I returned to my room, undressed and climbed into my sleeping bag. It was going to be a difficult night; it always was without Steve. I wouldn't be able to be here without Elizabeth.

On the second day the tinkle of the bell awoke me at 5:30 a.m. I had tossed and turned most of the night because of a stuffed nose from the butter on the bread since I didn't eat dairy anymore. I dressed quietly in a long sleeve T-shirt and sweat pants, trying not to disturb Elizabeth, who didn't have to get up for another hour, and went to the washroom, moving deliberately, not looking at anyone I passed in the hall. You felt like you had to acknowledge people but we weren't there to acknowledge anyone but ourselves. Back in the bedroom I dressed in layers of wool and down, then softly closed the door behind me.

It had snowed lightly during the night and walking mindfully to the meditation building in the darkness was like moving through crystallized air. While meditating, tears fell gradually and consistently down my cheeks, dropping onto my lap. Where did they come from? I wasn't crying nor was I thinking of anything, trying hard to empty my mind and label my thoughts. My legs fell asleep, a sharp pain between my shoulders persisted, and I wanted to move but struggled not to. Suddenly the tinkle of bells denoted the end of the thirty-minute session and we dropped into the child's pose to relax. I was uncomfortable and, with five more days of this to come, somewhat apprehensive. Irene was going to instruct us in some yoga for the next hour. The stretches felt luxurious in the candle-lit room and the incense smelled sweet and Middle Eastern. We then walked to the dining room for breakfast - hot oatmeal and a bagel - followed by chores. I was assigned to the kitchen because, as Shirley remarked, Elizabeth and I were a good team, so I didn't have to do the vacuuming or bathroom cleanup for which I was most thankful. Elizabeth, in very few words, described what had to be done and I went about my work grateful to be near her. I scrubbed and sliced tons of carrots and potatoes and was done at 9:30 with a few minutes left to sit by the fire. Shirley called my name and asked me to sit with her and Anne. They asked how I was doing and I told them about the tears. It

was natural, they said, a release of repressed emotions. Shirley had cried for years. Feelings surfaced as we relaxed, blocks were dissolving, barriers coming down. Is that what it took, I wondered, just to slow down for things to surface? I was all for it.

At 10:00 a.m. the chimes signaled the next two-hour meditation - sitting, lying, walking and standing. I was still experiencing pain between my shoulder blades and my legs and feet had pins and needles. The lying meditation after sitting for thirty minutes almost put me to sleep. We then dressed for outdoors and the walking meditation. I welcomed the cold air, warm under five layers of clothing. We stood in one spot for 5-7 deep breaths, proceeded to walk by lifting our foot in slow motion while repeating the word "lifting" in our minds, then moving our foot forward while silently repeating the word "moving," then placing our foot on the ground while silently repeating "placing" for 10-15 feet, repeating the words three times, with our eyes looking straight ahead. It seemed fairly easy - lifting, moving, placing, lifting, moving, placing. My balance took a while to adjust and then I was off. I chose fifteen feet of grass near the dormitory building at the edge of a meadow surrounded by huge trees. At the end of our space we had to stand still for 5-7 breaths, silently repeat the word "intending" (for intending to turn), and repeat the word "turning" as we turned to go back the other way. It slowed you down. Out of the corner of my eye I could see the others gliding slowly across the meadow, lifting, moving, placing. I liked this because I liked to walk and be outside. When the chimes rang I turned to see if the lady behind the building had heard the signal and then realized she would eventually see all of us heading back to the lodge. So I labeled my feeling of concern "worrying, worrying, worrying," and started back. After a few steps I turned and there she was.

A noon lunch of fresh baked chapatis, salad with poppy seed dressing, spinach dahl, brown rice, and potato-pea curry was superb. With such a spread, eating mindfully was difficult. We sat at the table without any eye contact and ate one mouthful at a time, after which we placed our fork on our plate, our hands in our laps and chewed very slowly with a long pause before the next mouthful. There were flowers in the middle of each table to remind us of the impermanence of life. Silence made a social event private. It was interesting. We didn't have to be sociable, just mindful. So far, so good.

After lunch there was private time before the 2:00 p.m. meditation and I went for a walk. Elizabeth joined me and we circled the woods - snowy and cold. We didn't talk and even if I wanted to, she wouldn't. This area was in Kananaskis country, the word meaning "meeting of the waters," a recreation area in the foothills of the Rockies.

From 2:00 to 4:30 p.m. we did sitting, lying, standing and walking meditations. Then Shirley gave a talk on mindfulness. When things came up in our meditations, we had to label them three times and then go back to our breath so that we acknowledged our thoughts and let them go. It was different from concentration meditation in which you concentrated on one object. The sitting was difficult because of the pain in my back and my legs falling asleep, and I had the urge to swallow often.

We had dinner at 5:30 - carrot porridge, millet and barley gruel. I wanted more but it was supposed to be a light meal, much easier to digest at night. I finished eating with just enough

time to shower and walk slowly to the evening meditation at 7:00 p.m. I didn't sit on a pillow this time and it was easier on my legs. My hot flashes seemed less severe during the session and afterwards, I went out to do the walking. It was cold and windy, nobody else was out, and it felt good to be by myself. After the chimes, Shirley gave a talk on Vipassana - insight - and Anne led the loving kindness meditation. When she asked us to send Shirley warmth and gratitude, my tears started falling again and kept falling until the end of the prayer.

After most of the people had left, I stayed to do some stretches and at 9:50 retired. Elizabeth was already asleep. I hoped to sleep better tonight. And I did.

The morning walk to the meditation building was wonderful - dark, cold, exhilarating and private. Ghostly figures moved slowly, silently in the night like the lamas in James Hilton's *Lost Horizon*. The candle-lit room was warm and inviting with Shirley and Anne sitting buddha-like at the front. The rest of us adjusted until we were comfortable. I took three deep breaths and tried to focus on my breathing. My legs fell asleep, the pain in my upper back returned and I squirmed in my seat as other people continued to look for comfort as well. It didn't happen for me. When I finally settled down, a clear picture of a red-brick building with a door framed by flat gray stones flashed in my mind. The meditation was increased to forty minutes and I was relieved when it was over. It was sunny and beautiful outside and a pleasure to spend time in the fresh crisp air. Tears fell on my way to the lodge for breakfast, during morning chores, while people brought their empty dishes to the counter, and at the 10:00 a.m. meditation. When I concentrated on my breath, the tears continued; when my mind drifted, they stopped. I became excited when the pain between my shoulders ceased. Those locked emotions, the frozen grief I had always worried about, were dissolving. It was an incredible insight for me to feel my grief in falling tears. Swallowing was still a problem but my hot flashes had decreased.

A lunch of rainbow vegetables, millet burgers with red pepper sauce, salad, cornbread and cheese was delightful and a respite from our strict agenda. There was a half-hour after the meal for a walk in the woods with Elizabeth, who brought apples for the horses up the road. One of the mares had only one eye and I felt sorry for her. My daughter, who saw the good in most things, didn't, commenting on how well the hair had grown over the empty socket. I mentioned the pain in my back and she said she would look for a piece of wood to raise me off the floor. It would give her something to do during the afternoon.

The 2:00 p.m. meditation went well and the afternoon talk on the three un- wholesome roots that caused suffering, "dukka," was very interesting.

"1. greed (attachment, clinging, liking, desiring, grasping, craving, obsessing); our life here is brought by desire; these feelings are okay to a degree, but if they are strong, they cause suffering.

"2. aversion (disliking, hating, resentment, avoiding, envy, worry, fear, anxiety, anger, criticism, distress, irritating).

"3. delusion (confusion, not seeing, blind faith, unsure, unclear, indifference, denial,

dishonesty with oneself)."

Greed can go along with delusion as well as hate. However, greed and hatred never arise together and delusion can arise on its own.

Wholesome qualities weaken the unwholesome ones in day-to-day life.

"1. generosity covers greed; if the intent is wholesome you can give in many ways - a smile, a present, love ... any form of giving has merit.

"2. loving kindness covers hatred; if you know you're angry, be gentle and kind to yourself; take a cup of hot tea and nourish yourself; if you feel angry during a meditation, label it three times and let it go. If we don't label it, it grows and the ego gets involved.

"3. wisdom covers delusion; having an experience and understanding it, like having an insight; wisdom comes through experience, you need the experience, then you have to work through it."

Labeling is a tool for us to see what our tendencies are. Anger, which has a vibratory effect on everyone around you, can be a powerful tool. It creates so much unhappiness in us and if you can label anger, then you can weaken it. Always go back to your breath to see what comes up. Whatever comes up needs to be recognized. To know what group you're in gives you the opportunity to see where and who you are. It creates awareness. If you're in the greed group, then how can you be generous without being greedy, with no strings attached?

We can achieve mindfulness through our mind, our thoughts, our speech, and our actions. Mindfulness teaches understanding our own mind, shaping the mind (having a chance to make a choice; for example, you can be angry and then decide what to do with it) by choosing something wholesome. It will have a wholesome effect on this and future generations. The energy behind a wholesome thought is powerful so it's important how we shape the mind.

Some of the retreatants were getting crazy. As the silence and introspection deepened, emotions ran high. The conferences we had with Shirley and Anne throughout the days helped us deal with it. By concentrating on our breathing, our minds weren't wandering about, leaving our emotions room to surface. When you become mindful, insights arise.

Sitting was easier after Elizabeth gave me three boards she had cleaned and dried. I was overjoyed with my tears. The emotional block was dissolving and my heart and lungs would start to heal. She attended the dharma (Buddha's teachings) talk that night, and after everybody had left, we stayed to do yoga, ending the evening writing in our journals over tea and cookies. The days were passing slowly.

During the fourth day's morning meditation, I had an insight. I realized that "watching the breath" was not "breathing." My body breathed so my mind could be free to observe the breath. I became aware of my abdomen rising and falling rather than concentrating on the breathing itself. A whole different concept. Very exciting. My conscious mind was focused on

one thing - the breath - so that my subconscious mind was free to surface.

Granola for breakfast - nuts, seeds, cold protein - left me chilled. The fat in the nuts didn't allow for easy digestion and my breathing was labored during the meditation. I had a number of twitches in my right ovary and still had to swallow a lot, which Shirley said would eventually leave. I also drifted a great deal.

My thoughts drifted to Elizabeth and the desire for her to find a nice man to share her life. Shirley said I should label it, "desiring, desiring, desiring," and go back to my breath. No tears today. Because I had a headache in the morning, Elizabeth had adjusted my seventh vertebra, and I was rushed getting to the sitting. I couldn't decide whether to hurry and get there on time and not disturb the group or to walk slowly, get there late and disturb the group. Shirley reminded me to label it and be mindful when I was rushing.

Lunch - a colorful carrot salad with poppy seed dressing, pasta, a stir-steam of chard, green pepper and baked tofu - found me facing the inside of the room rather than the windows that looked out at a large fir tree. The reflection of the ceiling fan in the vase holding the yellow carnations became a focal point until the light in the room changed when clouds passed. Many of the retreatants closed their eyes or looked down while eating. I fixated on objects. The tree was easier to stare at, which is why I liked to sit facing the window. The food was pure extravagance. I know the yogis didn't eat like this in their mountain caves.

For the 2:00 p.m. session we did the "part to part" meditation, cleansing areas of the body. I got itchy and couldn't sit still no matter what I tried. When I told Shirley and Anne about it later, they said it was my body's resistance and it might not happen again. It worried me.

The dharma talk that evening was on clear comprehension: thoughts, speech and actions. Was what I was going to say and do beneficial and wholesome? Were my thoughts going to benefit others? Were the time and place suitable? Was the action or speech to be done in the most skillful ways? What was my intent? What does my practice mean to me? Can I take what I learn and apply it to day-to-day living? LABEL EVERYTHING!

At 3:00 a.m. I awoke to the sound of a wild wind that sounded as if the roof was being ripped off the building. An alarm went off and continued for a long time. It frightened me. Elizabeth slept through it all peacefully, just as she does in the mountains. When I heard voices, I got up and went into the foyer to find Shirley in her pastel satin pajamas talking to the caretaker. The power was off. I returned to my room and dressed while my daughter calmly turned over and went back to sleep after I told her what was going on. I returned to the living room, helped carry in wood and started a fire. Shirley brought her quilt into the room and went to sleep on the couch. It was almost 4:00 a.m. when Barb said, "Let's do some yoga." She was a yoga teacher and that would be the natural thing for her to do. I said okay even though I thought she was nuts. We started some exercises but I couldn't get it together so I decided to meditate. It was like being in our cabin, in front of a fire with absolute silence, no electric hum. Barb and I talked about the din of civilization and after she asked about the way I lived, said she envied me. You don't really plan it that way but as time passes you settle into a mode of

being alone, unplugged, remote and isolated. The chimes suddenly rang signaling the start of another day. Had anybody heard what went on during the night? I couldn't ask.

The early morning meditation found me attempting the "part by part" with no restlessness this time. It was windy and cold but the walking was wonderful. Lunch was the best meal - roast potatoes, stuffed squash, salad with a ranch dressing. I was finally getting the hang of my abdomen rising and falling, not forcing the breathing, letting it happen as we unconsciously breathe all the time. It is actually restful when it all comes together. The boards worked well and my legs didn't fall asleep anymore.

We can shape our minds. Meditation was an avenue for this. It allowed for the insights to bring us spiritual happiness - peace, joy and contentment, a little more ease in day-to-day living. Then it depended on how much you wanted to cultivate it.

After the walking meditation on our last day, we met back in the room, formed a circle and Shirley, swearing she wasn't going to cry, began to bring the retreat to an end; she immediately started to cry. We all cried with her, while taking turns recounting our experiences, as a tissue box was passed around the room. The man next to me said he hadn't cried since he was a child; he wasn't allowed to. This was his first retreat and he had no idea it was going to be anything like this.

Everybody had an "alarm night" story, some of which were hysterically funny. When my turn came, I said all I could remember was Shirley in her pastel satin pajamas in the black hallway looking like an angel. I told how I had planned to get water from the creek so the toilets would flush; after all, we were twenty people without electricity. Shirley labeled that "worrying, worrying, worrying," which is what I do a lot. I was never aware of it but labeling brought it up. I also said that I had heard the man sitting next to me, who I later found out had been meditating for over twenty years, swallow once in the whole six days. That got a laugh.

Most of us had gone through many changes and deep revelations. There were warm feelings in that circle of souls. The silence seemed to have brought power to the group and in our silence we were all friends, caring for one another, aware on a deeper level of the depths of despair and pain we all experience. We held hands and Shirley did the last loving kindness meditation. Our last lunch together was not silent.

She had warned that we would be re-entering a world that moved at a different pace than we had become used to for the last week, to be careful driving, and to be understanding of our families when we got home. They might sound loud or inconsiderate but we were overly sensitive.

While Elizabeth drove back to Calgary, we talked about my feelings during the week. I was happy it was over and wanted to do it again. I had learned a few things about myself - that there was much grief I had to deal with, that I could possibly face it, and that I worry too much. My posture and breathing had been corrected and I felt more comfortable sitting. And most of all, life was not what it seemed on the surface, but ran deep within our bodies, and

people need to be loved and understood. All I did for the rest of the day was talk!

OF BIRTH AND BEGINNINGS

Black spots in my pelvis - anger. I had to find a way to get rid of my anger. But first I had to figure out what I was angry about. Elizabeth. She was lonely and taking her problems out on me, said an alternative doctor we visited. She was breaking the bond, the bond my biological parents broke when I was put up for adoption. This was just a trigger. Her problems were hers but they triggered mine. I had to concentrate more on myself and let her go. I must be angry at my real parents and she sparked that anger that weekend when she was ornery and distant. There was an answer to the pain - let go and it would stop. The doctor said I wasn't grounded and when she pulled away, those feelings when my birth mother dumped me arose. I should ground myself. I have Steve.

On October 27th I awoke at 3:28 a.m. and Steve wished me happy birthday. Could I have been born at that time or was it just the "time of my liver?" At 7:40 a.m. I got up with no profound dreams of my real mother, which I always hope for and expect on my birthday, and realized that yet another year had passed with no information or messages from her. Was she thinking of me today as I am of her? Is she still alive? Where could she be?



After Elizabeth left for a well-deserved holiday in Hawaii, I Greyhounded it to the coast to see my kids along with a girlfriend who was visiting her family. Valerie and Caroline met me at the bus station. We stopped for some groceries and arrived at their house in the early evening. They had been in a car accident a few months ago and her husband was still in terrible pain. I called our chiropractor in Calgary to recommend a doctor. That evening she broke down, scared and helpless in the face of her husband's predicament. He hadn't worked for a while and wasn't improving. I hugged her like a little girl and said we would figure something out.

The next morning I drove my son-in-law to the recommended chiropractor's office and after much adjusting took him home. It didn't take long for him to function more easily and they both realized he was finally going to get better.

My little granddaughter was everything I could wish for. She was four and performed like an eight-year-old. We did yoga together, gave each other manicures and pedicures. Oiled up to her elbows, she threaded her fingers through my toes, massaging them. I even got a new hairdo. We all walked to the beach while Valerie and I talked about her persistent problems with her father, her in-laws, and the discord between her husband and her father. She struggled with all her relationships, admitting her confusion. I tried to help, and while she seemed to listen, I knew it would soon be forgotten; still I felt duty-bound - as a mother.

I was surprised when my friend had made other plans for the last night in the city after promising to let me stay at her hotel so my kids wouldn't have to take me to the bus station at 6:00 a.m., which is what happened. That old rejected feeling arose and I arrived home with a

sore throat, which developed into a full-bodied cold because I hadn't voiced my feelings. It's amazing how we never grow out of our childish emotional hang-ups. Had I told my friend I was angry, I might not have gotten a cold. It's called "dealing," difficult to do when you're intimidated by women, a trait developed from having an overbearing mother. It was much easier to talk to Steve, who listened with a loving ear. We were here to learn and if we didn't learn this time, we'd crave to return and try again. Craving, craving, craving!

In December I started working in preparation for an exhibit at the Devonian Gardens in Calgary, scheduled for March '99. At Elizabeth's urging, I had sent slides of my artwork and was chosen for a one-month show. I would be responsible for hanging and dismantling the exhibit and they, for the invitations and advertising. Sounded like a good deal. "The Gardens" was an extensive greenhouse situated on the top floor of one of the downtown indoor malls where people could stroll along brick walkways, over bridges, amongst pools of exotic fish, fountains and fabulous flower displays, and enjoy lunch, a private conversation, a refreshing respite.

My routine for the next three months began every morning with starting a fire in the little cabin, after which I returned to the main house to have breakfast with Steve. Then, for the rest of the day, I chopped, rasped, sanded and polished my inner emotions into my marble, while the snow accumulated and the tree limbs hung heavy; a meditative woman walking, walking, walking with a lotus flower as her heart in white alabaster; a realization of letting go of Elizabeth, our hearts as one, in pink alabaster; and a reclining bison in black serpentine. It felt good to be carving again. Two new prints - an Indian paintbrush and a wild rose - added to my wildflower series and, along with all my other prints and sculptures, comprised an extensive repertoire of work.

✂ 1999 ✂

"Homelessness" in Canada was declared "a national disaster." "Serbs in a Belgrade demonstration protested the Canadian government's decision to join the NATO bombing campaign aimed at stopping ethnic cleansing in the Yugoslav province of Kosovo. Canada had never before attacked a sovereign country that had not previously attacked Canada or one of its allies." Scores of demonstrators gathered in Seattle, Washington to protest the plans of the WTO to expand 'free trade.' Stanley Kubrick died.

On a brisk January morning on one of my walks to our telephone, I received a message to call Esther, my Vancouver birth buddy. She informed me that a few more adoptees had joined the list of Dr. R.'s deliveries. When in Montreal, she met a woman who worked for Parent Finders and after telling her of my dilemma, Penny, an adoptee herself, who wasn't doing searches anymore, said she would help me. I wrote to her about the Hershorns, giving her all the data I had. She eventually found that they hadn't been born in Montreal and sent me the birth indexes for 1900-1925, the marriage indexes for 1926-1974, and the death index; there was nothing. She did find Isidor Hershorn, a milkman, on Avenue Henri Julien, but I already knew that. I wasn't any further along than before. I asked if she could find any papers on me; she said she would try. In the meantime I called a cousin in New York whom I hadn't seen

since childhood and who lived next door to the Hershorns in 1929. He remembered Lily and Ruth, probably born between 1917 and 1921, making them between twenty-three and nineteen when I was born. Either could have been my mother.

The opening of my exhibit at Calgary's Devonian Gardens went well. Valerie, in the seventh month of her second pregnancy, flew in from Edmonton where she was working. A friend brought two beautiful trays of food and I made some dips. Steve sent me two dozen red roses that gave a festive touch to the table. It had taken two grueling days of moving marble and hanging the show. Two television studios interviewed me and as the days passed, many people viewed the work. On the morning of the opening we found my grizzly stone missing from the glass case it was in. The curator was shocked as we were. This had never happened before. I was eventually reimbursed for my stone but the feelings of somebody actually reaching into the case and stealing it were bizarre. I sold a few pieces, enough to pay for the preparation, and after one month we struck the show and returned to the cabin. Our time in the city was over and it was a relief to be home, the two of us alone again.

On the 24th of April the ice melted and the creek opened. All the dams we had built with fallen trees, branches, stones and mud, against the rushing water coming too close to the cabin, didn't matter. It picked its own course and we watched it rise and flood the marsh. It was 75°P, the first real warmth of the year. As the days got longer and the summer solstice drew near, there was a feeling of new beginnings.



On May 6th Kathy Ellen, my second grandchild, was born. Steve and I had driven to the coast to help Valerie. Caroline cried when her parents left for the hospital in the late afternoon, but we convinced her to remain home with a promise to stay up all night, dressed, and watch television until the phone call came. Two hours later: "Mom, I have another little girl," Valerie cried between sobs, excited and relieved. "Come now."

We bought a bouquet of flowers for Caroline to give her mother, and when we arrived found Valerie cuddling a tiny being in her arms. We stayed for a few hours, took some pictures, then left as it was getting late. They waited until the next day to tell the rest of the family so we could have some private time together. Her father didn't make it to the hospital but waited until she got home to visit. After Valerie admitted to being afraid of a confrontation between him and me, Steve and I decided to leave for the afternoon to do some chores, to alleviate her anxiety and ours. Upon returning we found her in tears. She had dressed up for him and all he could say was that she still looked pregnant. He and his wife had arrived expecting lunch and Valerie, with everything else to do, felt obliged to prepare it for them. That evening while she was nursing her newborn, he called and a bar- rage of twenty-four years of hatred left her bewildered until her husband took the phone out of her hand and disappeared, closing the door behind him. Her father didn't get to see me as he had expected and wanted to come up, drag me out onto the street by the hair and beat the shit out of me. "How long is she going to suck on her mother's tit!" he screamed at his son-in-law over the phone. What an awful man I had married. And divorced!

Valerie's husband threatened him saying he'd call 911 if he came near the house and proceeded to lock all the doors. She cried, afraid I would never come to visit again. We stayed a few more days until she got settled. I was glad to have been there for my daughter but I knew the memory would eventually fade under her father's fervor.

As women and mothers we ourselves are to blame for losing our daughters. They are indoctrinated into this patriarchal society by us. It took me forty-eight subservient years to see who my father was and to say "no." Riveted by their desires, run by their egos, too many fathers will persist in their roles unless they can actually love someone other than themselves and see their daughters as independent people not owned by them. Unless a man can become more in touch with his female side, therefore becoming more aware, he will continue to treat women as inferior. We have no choice when it comes to the abuses of our fathers. Unless we become aware of the abuse and make a conscious decision to do something about it, we pass it along to our daughters, perpetuating the pain and fear. The only way out is to seek help and make the attempt to change. Fear keeps us down.



When I picked up our mail on the way home from town, there was a letter from Penny, the woman who worked at Parent Finders. Trying to remain calm I tore open the envelope. "I've made a start and found your name in the baptisms and was also able to find the listing in the synagogue of your baptism and your adoption judgment," she wrote. I couldn't believe it. I reread the letter. It was there. I had papers. I was registered. I am real.

This was one of those infrequent times in a search that was so rewarding. There were actually papers I never thought existed because my father said there weren't any. As far as my birth mother went, there were no names or identifying data, a little disappointing, but not enough to overshadow the rest. This was a piece to the puzzle of my identity.

I felt light-headed. I looked at the letter a number of times, then walked up the lane to the phone and called Penny. She told me that when she saw my name, she almost hit the roof. It was the very last entry in the microfiche file for the year 1940. Because there were no other names, no parents, no other identification, she thought I would be depressed. I was thrilled there was anything at all. She would send me a copy of the information as soon as she received payment. I sent her a check for \$22.50 and waited impatiently to see the real thing.

When I had started my search I had nothing except my birth certificate with the Norton Notes, and I hadn't discovered the latter until well after starting my quest. Now I had something. I knew that the original documents had been sealed and locked away forever, but if British Columbia could open their files, so could the other provinces. Although Quebec is archaic in its policies, things can and do change.

So my parents did have my papers and either discarded or burned them. They weren't honest with themselves or with me about their infertility and substitute methods of parenting, and

therefore they couldn't help me or even understand my need to know. This must have been painful for them, not being able to have their own children.

*"Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced."*³



It was June, the summer solstice, a time of celebration and sadness, for the sun, at its zenith, was starting back towards the equator and the days would be getting shorter. It was also one of the worst nights of my life. I had been typing most of the day, after getting out Steve's journal for 1973 when we met, looking for some background for my book. Well, I got it and a lot more. After reading about our beginnings, I became upset. I said nothing at the time because I wasn't sure what was bothering me but after watching a movie and getting into bed, I felt nauseous and weak. I took a natural relaxant of valerian root and passion flower and tried to sleep, but I couldn't stop thinking about how much time I had spent with him and away from my kids. I always talked about mothers staying home with their children and I deluded myself into thinking I had, but for a few years I had thrown all caution to the wind and had flown to New York often to be with him.

I was the dutiful, adopted daughter doing what I was raised to do until I met Steve and saw a way out of a life for which I had been conditioned, completely alien to who I truly was. I had gone from my parents' home into my own with my husband, and soon after the three girls were born. I met some creative men - actors, artists, filmmakers, sculptors - and all I wanted to do was to spend my time with them.

I lay in bed feeling terrible and thought I was going to throw up. My head ached. I finally woke Steve. He corrected my atlas-axis but the pain persisted. When I told him what I had been reading, he got nauseous too. We dozed while listening to a mouse scurrying around the kitchen dodging the trap, and at 4:00 a.m. we finally got up. Still feeling weak and miserable I started a fire in the wood- stove to boil water to fill a hot water bottle for Steve's neck. He had assimilated my suffering.

Steve said that sometimes we did things for which we hated ourselves. That was exactly where I was at. Perhaps I was angry with myself at the way I reacted to the injustices of my divorce. What also got to me was the realization that my two older daughters admitted they wanted to remain with their father after being at his house for the weekend with his new wife, Steve's old girlfriend, and a friend of hers, the man who had a hand in convincing the girls to stay with their father and not tell me about their scheme. The kids and their father were ripe to be influenced by these angry, revengeful people who had a stake in our future, Steve's and mine. When twisted minds like theirs, nurturing egotistical, subconscious needs, touched an ambivalent nature like my ex's, children were not considered. Adults as well as children, if confused, could easily be swayed for an effortless answer to their problems. It had been out of my hands. Subconsciously, did I not want to take my kids with me? We were all packed, ready to go (before they announced they wanted to remain with their father), I kept repeating to myself trying to justify my actions. At 4:00 a.m. I decided to drop the whole thing and go

back to my sculpture. Steve promised to burn his diaries. I hadn't remembered most of what was in them and perhaps we shouldn't be rehashing old stuff like this. It was too painful. But the feelings I had denied for so many years had to surface and be dealt with. We finally fell asleep, wretched and exhausted, as dawn's first light filtered through the deep shadows of night.

Tears came during my meditation and I sent forgiveness to myself. I struggled with this mother business, not being there for my kids when they needed me. I realized I had to go through the pain which for so long had been locked inside my body, experience it and talk about it. This was part of my life, part of my adoption too. My children have me as their role model. What have I passed onto them from my adopted status? I had to understand myself to understand them.

After the divorce I had never wanted to think about my ex-husband again. The diaries forced me to remember and as Steve and I talked, my unconventional actions of the past, plus the guilt and paranoia built up over so many years, read-justed in the light of day. I spent my time at home with my children. Divorce is the responsibility of two people. It wasn't all my fault.



Three weeks later a letter arrived from Penny enclosing: the index of deaths in Quebec during 1931 to 1985 for Hershorn; a photocopy of the card showing my baptism from the Montreal, non-Catholic Birth Index, reel #33; a photocopy of the baptism from the Chevra Shaas, Jewish Congregation, Montreal, 1940, from Drouin Reel #112ZE; the Certificate of Judgment found at the very end of the microfiche files of 1940. She wrote: "You now have your Superior Court Judgment number but I don't know who can access it. Maybe a lawyer?"

The Certificate of Judgment confirmed my adoption. There are papers of thousands of lost children like myself hidden in dark, dusty basement corners of courthouses. And nobody cared. As long as the secrets weren't revealed, the subterfuge surrounding them remained. But my discovery gave me a glimmer of hope and I knew I had a history. Roots, but where? Where? I still didn't know but there they were on paper. The drama and feeling of lightness stayed with me all day, and when I awoke the next morning, I felt that I was a step ahead. This was a great achievement in my search. I realized ever more deeply the unfairness of this discriminating situation in which all of us adoptees find ourselves.

On July 8th I sent a letter to the lawyer who had met with my birth buddies in Montreal. I had nothing to show him until Penny's information had arrived. I also mailed three letters: to the Minister of Justice, Mr. Serge Menard; to the premier of Quebec, Mr. Lucien Bouchard; and to the Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Jean Rochon.

I am in favor of the Bill of Law modifying the Quebec Civil Code and the Youth Protection Act proposed by Andre Desaulniers. The proposition can be viewed on the following internet site: <http://www.total.net/adoption>. Your support, suggestion or opinion regarding this issue would be greatly appreciated.

During my meditation the next morning, I tried to get to the reason that my hands were clenched. I looked for tension in my body and found a bit in the pit of my stomach. I had such difficulty expressing anger. What was I angry about? "Be nice to your mother," my father's constant plea. I didn't want to be nice to her. I wanted her to be nice to me. Maybe he should have been nice to her. I tried to feel my anger but nothing moved. Then a thought came to me. My hands were tied as far as my adoption went. I went back to my hands and tried to find the place of tension in my body. There was a small, hard ball in the pit of my stomach. I picked away at it and the strands came loose and the shiny sphere, two inches in diameter, broke loose and floated upwards. Just above me it burst open, emptied into the air and disintegrated. I felt a warmth crawl over the backs of my hands. The spot in my stomach relaxed and tears spilled. A tightness in my chest, significant of old grief, then more tears. A feeling of relief spread through my upper body and I finished my meditation with loving kindness filling me, praying to be well, at peace, at ease and happy.

Yes, my hands were tied; I couldn't get into my records. After so many years of searching, I stared at my Judgment of Adoption. My parents had destroyed this significant paper which was the passport to my identity.

A week later my mind wandered during my meditation. My hands were tight again and I brought my consciousness to them. I saw myself as very small with two walls meeting at a corner, and on the other side my parents were talking to me. They were saying things I didn't want to hear. I sat motionless. The walls formed a fort between us. They talked while the wind rustled the curtains behind me. It was a whisper of things. And all I wanted to do was join my friends outside. My stomach clenched up and then the tears came. I kept going back to the walls with me behind them, very small, not meaning anything in my parents' lives. It was something they had to do - to tell me - but I didn't want to hear. Maybe my hands were clenched in anger at having to be told that I wasn't theirs. Maybe I wanted to hit them and couldn't. Maybe I wanted to be mad at my biological parents and couldn't. Maybe I felt frustrated that my life had been suddenly torn apart.

I wrote to Louise Tessier at the Bibliotheque Nationale asking if she could find the last year that Isidor Hershorn had lived on Henri Julien Street. Perhaps I could trace the family's next move. My letter to the Montreal lawyer was returned with no forwarding address.

Deep within my belly behind my torn umbilicus, there was a hard spot - a plate of armor - and when I rubbed it early in the morning as the darkness turned to light, I thought about my birth. Formed by our being torn apart at that moment when my real mother and I had to be together, it hardened further after each of my daughters' births until the accumulated scar tissue jailed the emotions retained by the physical body. I dug my fingers into the hard mass and massaged it until a feeling of nausea arose and I had to stop.

A letter from the Gouvernement du Quebec, Cabinet du Premier Ministre, arrived in answer

to my letter about modifying the adoption laws. They were taking note of its contents and I felt sure that would be as far as it went. But one must try and perhaps if they got enough letters of complaint, somebody would take notice.

THE KUSHI INSTITUTE

I had started menopause when I was forty-six and thought my life was over. Severe symptoms lasted for six weeks and then my body simmered down to perimenopausal hot flashes, night sweats and occasional mood swings. It was now ten years later and I was still sweating.

I had never considered hormone replacement therapy because of the negative aspects associated with it: increased risk of breast and reproductive cancer, fibroids, headaches and migraines, vaginal yeast overgrowth, elevated blood pressure and triglyceride levels, blood clotting, stroke, heart attack and depletion of vitamin E and zinc. Why would anyone even consider such odds?

I tried progesterone cream derived from wild yam, homeopathics lachesis and nux vomica, extra vitamin E, evening primrose oil, and licorice tea, which stimulates estrogen production. I had visited a nutritionist, a homeopath, a Hawaiian herbalist, naturopaths, chiropractors, an acupuncturist, a neuro spinal bioengineer, and a colonic therapist; but my sweats continued. Diagnoses ranged from a congested liver, a kidney imbalance and just menopausal symptoms. I read books that recommended dong quai, black cohosh, red clover, oat straw, chickweed; drinking a lot of water; exercise; no red meat or dairy products; and eliminating stress and anger. Stress? That might be something beyond my control. Anger? That surfaced as resentment and I was working at it. It takes a great effort to visualize good things happening to a person towards whom you feel resentment. Since I couldn't seem to drop it, I must be getting something out of it, like playing the victim, feeling sorry for myself, and therefore not having to take on the responsibility for changing my life. I knew I had to be able to forgive myself in order to forgive others. Aware that repressing these emotions caused illness, I had been meditating regularly. But my sweating persisted.

Steve had been bothered by gout for many years due to a life in the fast lane, sometimes needing crutches or a cane when the attacks got bad. He seemed to have it under control during his oral chelation regime but after seven months, a call to his mother, who was in a nursing home, crippled him. We hadn't hiked all summer and were hesitant to make plans in case his foot flared up. As a result of eating organic food for twenty-five years, we rarely got colds, had no major hospital incidents, and lived active lives. Our friends thought us the picture of health. However, we were desperate!

On one of our regular trips to Calgary, Steve was on crutches and depressed because his pain would not stop as it had in the past. I called Elizabeth who had been studying at the Kushi Institute in Becket, Massachusetts for the past seven months. She told us about the miraculous cures people experienced on a macrobiotic diet, and when she heard my desperation, said we should come now. It didn't take long to decide. She was going to try getting us an appointment with Michio Kushi, the man of macrobiotics.

Our wilderness cabin was secure except for the contents in the fridge, which were taken care

of with a call to our neighbors. The garden was well on its way, the weather wet, and they would water if necessary. Our house in Calgary, where we were, was more difficult, but a friend agreed to mow the lawn, take in the mail, and water the plants.

Seven o'clock the next morning the shrill ring of the telephone startled us. There were two cancellations a week from Monday, which would give us ample time for a cross-country drive. Elizabeth, living at a blueberry farm near the Institute, exchanging work for free rent, said we could stay with her. We called our friends in New York, who spent weekends at their country home in Great Barrington, close to Becket, and told them we were on our way. They couldn't believe we were coming east (we hadn't been there for over twenty years) and invited us to spend time with them. My cousins, Becky and Saul in Ontario, insisted their home be a pit-stop on our way.

We left Calgary eight days before our appointment, with Elizabeth's two-burn-er electric stove, cooking utensils, food, filtered water, and ten audio-tape books from the library. We had come to Calgary for the weekend and had only our laundry, which became our wardrobe. Just past Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, blue skies, oil wells and a rainbow, arched above the vast curvature of the Earth, reminded us we were on the prairies. Fading light and continuous rain compelled us to pull into a small motel in the border town of Estevan. The odometer, having started at zero in Calgary, now read 950 kilometers / 594 miles.

In Minot, North Dakota, we changed our U.S. coins, having carried them around for fifteen years, into paper money and headed east through fields of black-eyed Susans, amber waves of wheat, round hay bales scattered over green pastures, and grain silos against a cloudless sky, listening to the 1940's pop music of Gene Autry, the comedy of Red Skelton, the cowboy adventures of Hopalong Cassidy all the way into Minnesota. At Duluth, on the western tip of Lake Superior, we found a small motel and a health food store. The odometer read 1923 km. / 1202 miles.

Scattered clouds floated in the morning sky as we parked on a bridge which spanned a tiered waterfall cascading through forested banks, leaving polished pools in rocky ledges far below. After buying some organic food, we continued around the lake, fascinated by the antiquity of the sprawling port with its quaint, turn-of-the-century stone buildings, fleets of freighters in the harbor, steel stacks, and a prodigious bridge that took us into Wisconsin. As the western sky turned or-angered, we crossed the famous five-mile Mackinac Suspension Bridge between Great Lakes Michigan and Huron, a high, intimidating structure that seemed to depend on invisible sky hooks to hold it up. South of Indian River we left the thruway to fill up our gas tank in a small town; it had no garage, and, too tired to go on, we found a modest, slightly rundown motel with individual cabins in the trees, no phone, a fridge, great television, no remote. The odometer read 2617 km. / 1636 miles.

It was difficult leaving Bogart and Bacall on TV in the morning. We headed back to the thruway and the next town for a service station. The leaves were changing colors and the sky was powder-blue as we approached Flint and turned east for the Canadian border. In the late afternoon we pulled into the driveway of my cousins' two-hundred-year-old, pale yellow-brick

house on the corner of a treed city lot. Saul, my father's nephew, reminded me of my father. He looked and walked like him and had the same mannerisms and inflections. Becky, a spunky, ageless, warm-hearted, compassionate woman, served us black bean lasagna and red wine for dinner, and we caught up on our families. With Saul estranged from his oldest son and me from my middle daughter, we had much to talk about. I was surprised at his attitude when it came to my search and adoption. He thought I was making much ado about nothing, and it was Becky, frustrated at his insensitivity, who came to my defense. It is very clear to me that people who are not adopted do not have the slightest idea of what it is to be adopted. They don't think there is any difference between knowing one's real parents and not. And why bother to go to all that trouble? It only makes for unhappiness.

*"It may be almost impossible to understand fully the intensity of this need to know of the adoption and background information about their biological parents without having experienced, firsthand, the frustration of knowing that information exists, but is unavailable to those it most deeply affects."*¹

In the morning, while I baked a cornbread they had remembered from their visit to our cabin in B.C., Steve, my multi-talented partner, drew a cartoon of Saul for a logo on his stationery. The men left to get it printed and while they were gone, I listened to Becky recount her heartrending story about the birth of her daughter, a Down syndrome child, the circumstances involved around the decision to raise her at home, and the subsequent start of a daycare and school facility for other children like her. At first the doctor wouldn't admit anything was wrong with her newborn and then refused Becky's pleas to see her own child. It went from bad to worse until she took matters in her own hands, going to the hospital, getting her baby, and bringing her home. Sometimes I don't understand how we human beings live through the life we have chosen and get through with our wits intact. Actually, I believe few of us do.

The next morning my cousins took us to see their first love, a non-profit organization they had founded after their precious fifteen-year-old daughter died. We watched handicapped kids ride around the giant, heated indoor arena, toured the stables, and met the staff. Here these children and some adults were provided with the opportunity to experience the independence and freedom of movement through a connection with horses. It was amazing to see kids, bound to wheelchairs, get onto a horse and ride.

On our last day, while my cousin took me to the health food stores to promote my cookbook, Steve accompanied Saul on some chores. At a garage Saul asked him to pull over, got out, disappeared inside, and returned with a key, asking him to stop in front of a black iron gate on the other side of the road. He unlocked the barrier and motioned for him to drive through. Only then did Steve realize they were in a cemetery. "I don't do this with everybody," Saul admitted. Amidst the austere, sizable gravestones, there was one empty modest mound of grass with a small stone embedded in the earth inscribed with their daughter's name. He pointed out two spaces on either side where he and his wife would be buried. Tears welled up in his eyes and Steve felt a wave of emotion, not knowing whether he should have been there or not.

It was Friday night, the table was set for Sabbath dinner, and we watched my relatives go

through their ritual, which brought back memories of Jewish holidays in Montreal with my family. She lit the candles, said the prayers with her head covered, and after wishing each other Good Sabbath, we enjoyed her homemade soup, smoked turkey, potato salad and wine. This was our last evening with them and after watching a video of Becky receiving her "Women of Distinction" award for her community and volunteer efforts, there appeared an overflowing box of family photographs we had been meaning to look at all week. As I was going through the torn, dog-eared, sepia prints, an astonishing thing happened. I came upon Saul's father's passport. Fate must have guided my hand to turn those yellowed, brittle pages to discover the mystery of the Norton Notes, which had puzzled me for so many years, leading me on a wild goose chase through Vermont in search of my birth mother. There, at the top of a worn-out page, in the same handwriting, was the exact entry as the one on the back of my birth certificate. (Since I didn't have a passport they used my birth certificate.) I could barely explain to them the significance of my discovery. A major component of my search was over. An epiphany so rare in one's exploration of origins. When I was four (1944) and six (1946), my parents, along with Saul's parents, must have crossed the border at Norton on our way to Maine to visit my aunt, for Thanksgiving. WOW! The euphoria stayed with me for the next few days. Every time I thought about it, a gentle warmth embraced my heart which left me feeling elated. The Norton Notes were no more a mystery and I could go on with my search focused solely in Canada. I made a Xerox of the inscription so I could compare it with my birth certificate, knowing without question that they were identical.

With two more days before our consultation with Michio Kushi we left for the U.S. border. The thruway took us through the hilly farm country of upstate New York to our friends' home just outside Great Barrington, Massachusetts. It was 5:00 p.m. when they met us in West Stock bridge, a Norman Rockwell archetypal town.

Their two-hundred-year-old, wood-framed, two-story house, nestled amongst huge trees on two acres, had once been part of a large dairy farm, with a gurgling brook, beautiful flower gardens and a large secluded screened porch. Carol, a con-summated artist, had tastefully decorated the house down to the very last detail with New England antiques. Even the taupe color of the building had been chosen with care so that the structure, so close to the road, would blend into the woods. Our odometer read 3784 kilometers / 2365 miles.

Alan and Carol welcomed us warmly and said we could stay as long as we wanted. She had shopped with us in mind, and we started scrubbing, peeling and slicing vegetables over a bottle of wine and much catching up. It was fun being with them, both creative, bright, sophisticated New Yorkers. There weren't many people with whom we felt so at home. Suddenly there was a knock at the door and Elizabeth was in my arms again, just in time for dinner.

On Sunday afternoon our friends departed for the city and Elizabeth, with nothing scheduled for the next few days, stayed with us. The following morning we left for the two-and-a-half hour drive to Boston and Kushi House, a mammoth stone building with arched portico, landscaped and hidden from the road, not easy to find. The entrance hall was spacious with deep, brown-paneled walls, a stately staircase and wide glass doors at the back that led to a stone balcony.

Leaving our shoes in the foyer, we approached a table laden with books on macrobiotics, a tray with cups, and a thermos of hot bancha tea. Because we were a few hours early, we got directions to some secondhand bookstores, an art shop and an organic market.

The bookstores were sublime and we loaded up with titles hard to find. Boston was confusing with its one-way streets so we finally returned to the Kushi House and spent the next hour on the porch filling out extensive questionnaires. At 3:30 p.m. we were ushered into a large room. Steve and I sat on the couch while Elizabeth disappeared into a sizable stuffed chair on our right. Michio Kushi suddenly entered with his scribe, Chris, who sat directly opposite us while Michio took his usual place to our left, completing the circle.

He was seventy-three, thin, of medium height, and wore a dark grey suit with vest, white shirt and dark tie, and he had a thick Japanese accent. It was bizarre to finally meet the man whose books I had been reading for fifteen years. He introduced Chris and asked her to tell us her story. She vigorously recounted the details of her miraculous cure from terminal breast cancer thirteen years ago. Then he asked us to tell our stories. Very self-assured, understanding and reserved, he listened while Chris wrote everything down, and brushed away all our complaints with a sideways sweep of his hand, as if they would be easy to get rid of.

He looked into Steve's eyes, pulled the skin on his arm, saying it was shiny and that his liver spots were from sugar. He felt his back over his kidneys, checked his height, and said he could lose a few pounds. I was surprised because Steve seemed thin to me. He also said Elizabeth and I should each lose about seven pounds. He told Steve, who had been worrying about inheriting his mother's diabetes, that it was not hereditary, that he had a very remote chance of it and even if he got it, it could be cured. According to him the mental and physical are related but both are governed by what you eat. Protein didn't remain as amino acids in our bodies but was further changed into vibrations. The way of cooking and the combinations all change the mind. Alcohol altered the brain, depression came from eating tomatoes, hyper-talking from garlic.

When Steve was done he motioned for me to tell my story, then walked over, looked into my eyes, said I had a beautiful face and returned to his chair. It was a great relief to be with a man who can cure almost anything. When I told him I had no family history, he asked if I were searching. I replied yes. He then began talking about my grandparents and great-grandparents.

According to him my family history was good. My four grandparents were strong and originated in eastern Europe, somewhere like Yugoslavia or Poland. My grandparents were very healthy, especially my mother's mother; the weakest was my father's father. They were hardworking, decent and not rich. My great-grand-father on my father's side had a little mental trouble in middle age but overcame it, living to be sixty-four or -five, an advanced age in the previous century. My birth parents were married for three years but couldn't work it out. They were both nice; my father was more practical, more aggressive, while my mother was spiritual, more peaceful. He was a little weaker than my mother when he was young but got stronger. After

they had separated, my mother found that she was pregnant. She was about twenty-four when she gave birth to me. She lived in Poland, Hungary and Yugoslavia and married someone else. I have one or two stepsisters, one who might be in Europe and the other in North America, no brothers. There had been a brother but he was weak and likely died. He said my mother was still alive, she was very old, probably lived in Europe and would be difficult to find. My father had already passed away. When I asked him if he could tell me my mother's name, he said he could but he would need some quiet time. He thought I was lucky to have four parents or guardians; that I should have good thoughts towards them all, and that if I had bad thoughts about any of them, I should turn them on myself and let my body process them. If you can't meditate, don't; it's too yang. The worse you eat the more you have to meditate.

I had never expected anything like this. I wanted more but I guess I will always want more. When I told him I had a tapeworm, he asked if I wanted to get rid of it. Should I not want to? Then he asked with a smile if I didn't want to be charitable. He seemed serious but slightly playful. I remembered the naturopath who had diagnosed it said I might be better off with it. I wasn't sure anymore. If I wanted to get rid of it, Michio would tell me how.

He explained the underlying causes of my disorders: I had more kidney than intestinal problems. My sweats were from a congested liver; my itchy, scaly scalp and the red spot on my nose from eating too many seeds (tahini) and nuts; my itchy left ear and accumulation of wax from too much oil and fat; my morning stiffness in my right hand and the vertical ridges on my nails from excess minerals and fat; the crease on the soles of my feet below my big toes from heavy fat. He went on to describe the diet we must follow while gingerly sitting cross-legged in his chair, then moved easily to the floor to write in our personal folders on the coffee table between us.

Macrobiotics is mainly a grain diet. "Meal" is another word for "grain," so without grain, whatever we eat is just a snack. The three main types of vegetables in every meal are root (burdock, carrot, lotus, parsnip, daikon), round (onion, tur-nip, rutabaga, cauliflower, cabbage, etc.) and upward growing and leafy (bok choy, Chinese cabbage, kale, leeks, carrot, daikon and turnip tops, collards, etc.). Each creates a different effect. Root vegetables give a more rounded hearty effect while the other two engender a more relaxing and calming reaction.

No baking, no raw oil or raw salads, no flour products. Our major grain would be short- or medium-grain brown rice. We could have barley, millet and oats twice a week. No cracked grains like couscous, cracked wheat, rolled oats, corn grits, rye flakes or cornmeal for now. Whole wheat (udon, somen) and buckwheat (soba) noodles twice a week. We had to have 1 to 2 cups of soup daily, made fresh, and miso used should be naturally fermented for two or more years. Our salads must be boiled (less than a minute) or pressed - a raw salad feeds a tapeworm. We had to use water for sautéing, not oil for now. A mild sweet taste should predominate in most meals with sour, salty and pungent flavors used throughout the day for punctuation; otherwise cravings would result. He gave us three different healing drinks, told us to chew our grains fifty times or more, not to eat three hours before bedtime, and to sing a happy song every day. This regime was to continue for four months, and then we could start eating wider but not much.

My stiff hands would never be cured if I continued to eat baked flour. My sweat glands were clogged from chicken, eggs and dairy foods. I had the same feeling listening to him as I had with Papa Henry; both of them gave me the confidence that I was going to get well. We had gone to great effort to see this man and we wanted macrobiotics to work. I have always believed that you have more control over your health through food than relying on supplements.

He told us to do a body scrub in the morning and at night with a towel dipped in hot water; to walk outside for half an hour or longer; to wear 100% cotton clothing next to our skin and to use 100% cotton for all bed sheets and pillowcases; to avoid or minimize watching TV and computers for long hours, fluorescent lights, the use of artificially chemicalized cosmetics, soaps, toothpaste, etc; to use stain- less steel, ceramic or cast iron pots and pans, with glass being okay sometimes; to cook with gas or wood and especially to avoid microwave cooking, no baking in the oven; to sleep with our heads to the north and I should sleep on Steve's left. We must cook at least one fresh meal a day and minimize the use of leftovers which were good for a maximum of two days.

Elizabeth was excited to be in on the interview and was surprised that Michio spent so much time on the menus. As one of the head cooks at the Institute, it was beneficial for her to have witnessed how he used food truly as medicine and that her job was not only feeding but curing people as well. We felt intoxicated with in- formation and hopeful from his optimistic outlook. Deciding we needed a bit more time to absorb it all, we canceled our plans to leave the next morning.

For the next few days at our friends' home, Elizabeth gave us a crash course on macrobiotic cooking and mapped out a week's menu. We drove to the Kushi Institute in Becket to see where she had been spending all her time. In the heart of the Berkshires amid six hundred acres of secluded meadows, woodlands and streams, a winding road led to the top of a hill where the main building, a monastery at one time, the dormitory and the store were situated. The Institute, founded in 1978 by Michio and Aveline Kushi, provided macrobiotic education for health and healing on personal, social and global levels. We entered the building which housed the kitchen, staff living quarters and classrooms. It was a few minutes before the midday meal, and Elizabeth disappeared down the hallway; she returned moments later with an invitation to stay for lunch. In the meantime she showed us around. It was very peaceful, impressive with its stonework, gardens and quiet pools. Here, one could easily forget the world and take time to heal. The dinner bell sounded.

There were two sides to the serving table, the water-sautéed or healing side and the oil-sautéed or strong side for people who were not dealing with a chronic illness. The dishes were exceptionally prepared and Elizabeth explained which condiments to use, how much of each, and where to sit. My daughter was among friends. After lunch she took us to the store, where we shopped for items on our recommended list; then we left for her cottage in South Worthington, a forty-five minute drive through the hill country of Massachusetts.

Her cabin was delightful, situated at the edge of an expansive meadow rimmed with trees, with a large picture window that looked onto a pond. There was a loft over the kitchen area, no running water and an outhouse about thirty feet away. It was late afternoon when Steve fell asleep and she and I walked down to the field to gorge on blueberries. There were rows of four to eight feet tall bushes, more like trees, but bears had been through and most of the fruit was gone. We did manage, however, to fill a good-sized container. Elizabeth prepared dinner and talked about her plans while I relaxed on the couch and, for a change, did nothing. She was going to stay on at the Institute and take the last two levels if she could work it out. She seemed happy, loving the east with its culture, its diversity, and its proximity to New York. She played her guitar and sang her recent songs about her personal pain and suffering, all of which were moving and impressive, some bringing tears to my eyes. She has a way with words. And music.

The next day found us lost in the secondhand bookstores of Northampton. We talked about renting a place for the winter, spoke to a realtor and even went to see a house we found in the local paper. Always having loved the east, we probably would never have left, if not for my divorce. But our wilderness cabin beckoned, and we decided to head back west and see how we felt when we got home.

On Saturday morning we left, reset the odometer to zero, got lost in Cleveland, then found a small motel in Angola, Indiana, where we cooked dinner and dropped into bed, exhausted. 1200km. / 750 miles on the odometer.

Sunday was clear and the driving easy through the cornfields of northern Indiana. As we passed around the southern tip of Lake Michigan, the skyline of the windy city of Chicago unexpectedly loomed ahead and we suddenly seemed to enter a different dimension, gripped in the momentum of swarming converging vehicles, forced on from behind, while alert for signs as to which lane we should be in. Traveling on this thruway was like clutching the armrests in a dentist's chair.

You forgot to breathe. The undulating flow of traffic coursed through Wisconsin as we followed in its wake when, without warning, the monoliths of the twin cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul engulfed us. Like disturbed anthills, cars sped by with no respite until we passed St. Cloud, eighty miles away. And this went on every day while we sat in our wilderness cabin watching storms approach across sunlit valleys.

In Alexandria, Minnesota, two miles off the thruway, we found the Skyline Motel, an intriguing place. The owner asked if all the other motels were full and was that why we ended up at his lodging? I told him we supported small, out-of-the-way motels, sometimes landing in dumps, and there was a sudden bond between us. While he was filling out our receipt, I commented on his Norman Rockwell painting of an old red brick fire station on the wall behind him. He got to talking about what he went through to get it and his wife joined us in the office. He had been a fireman for thirty years and had first seen it in a museum, finally located a print and sent it to California to have it photographed onto canvas to simulate a real painting. He was so proud of it and wanted to talk art when he found out we were artists. Steve gave him the business card

for the Norman Rockwell Museum he had picked up in a store in West Stock bridge. While we were cooking dinner, he knocked on the door of our room, handed us a large book about his favorite painter from Montana, and told us to leave it in the room when we left. We loved the accommodation, a lot of warmth and care, something you never found in large chain-run motels.

We left early for Fargo, North Dakota while listening to reports about Hurricane Dennis battering the Carolinas. Grain elevators gave way to sunflower fields all the way to Bismarck, where we turned north for Minot. Farmland and high tension wires stretched for hundreds of miles and rolled hay bales dotted a patchwork of ochre, green and brown striped fields. We had come to the end of the audiotape which our friends had given to us, *Travels with Charley* by John Steinbeck, a trip he had taken cross-country with his dog Charley, passing through the same areas we had traveled. It was interesting to hear his point of view described in his inimitable way. We crossed the border without mishap, checked into a motel in Moose Jaw, exhausted from the long hot drive, unpacked while waiting for the room to cool and had to change rooms because that never happened. 3462 km./2163 miles on the odometer.

We were on the road by 7:15 the next morning, having prepared our food the night before. A brilliant pink and mauve sunrise followed us through some light rain as we passed under a high arched rainbow seen through the sunroof of our car. The intense orange-red sun cast a surreal quality to the atmosphere and the car seemed to be floating above the asphalt. Light rain and tumbleweed rolling across the highway, waving wheatfields, freshly cut brown squares against mature gold, blowing bulrushes beside the road, and milky-white mist in distant meadows. The clouds lightened as Swift Current came into view, the last sizable town before the Alberta border. Miles rolled by. Amber, ochre, burnt sienna and sage-colored shapes occasionally disturbed by a town, a hub. We continued northwest towards the ramparts of the Rockies, and a few hours later the downtown buildings of Calgary appeared on the horizon. We were home, that is to say, we were at our city house, and in a few days we would be back where country mice abide. 4173 kilometers/2608 miles. It had been an extra 389 km./243 miles going the thruway route, a half-day less and a lot more stress.

A few weeks later Elizabeth called to tell me that Michio had told her my biological mother's name, "Isabel Tirt, Tert, Thearte," he didn't know the spelling.

GOING WITHIN AGAIN

Our mail compartment was crammed full when we arrived home. A letter from the Bibliotheque Nationale advising the last year Isidor Hershorn had lived in Montreal, 1952. Steve's pain from his gout was gone after being on the macro-biotic diet for two weeks!

We started our four-month regime, stuck to it religiously, cooking from morning to night, with not only the preparation of our meals but healing drinks as well. It took two of us full-time. We lost a lot of weight, so much so that I called Michio Kushi to ask if this was normal. He said that being thin was the key to a long life. We continued to drive the 100 miles to Calgary every few weeks for our organic food and existed with healing first in our minds. It worked. We felt wonderful, Steve was pain-free and I had neither sweats nor stiff hands.

We became obsessive about our eating and when invited to friends, which wasn't often, we would appear at their door with our pot of freshly cooked organic brown rice. They understood. The advice to eat wider after the cleansing months, in other words, to incorporate more foods into our regime, fell on deaf ears. We didn't want anything to go wrong and didn't heed the warning.



*"While the body has a roof over its head and is fully protected from all the inclemencies of the weather the mind is not protected from the storms of its own emotions. Its one desire is to fall asleep."*¹

It had been a year when Elizabeth and I left Steve in Calgary once again for my second silent retreat. Many of the same people were back. When it came my turn to introduce myself, Shirley asked me "to tell the story behind the stone."

When she and her husband visited my exhibit at the Devonian Gardens in Calgary, she fell in love with a sculpture called "Lotus of Loving Kindness," a meditative woman walking with a lotus flower as her heart in white alabaster. She had talked about it so frequently to her students, they decided to purchase it and present it to her at their last get-together of the year.

In 1974 I had ordered that particular piece of Italian alabaster from New York City. We dragged it across the country to Wyoming, where I did some preliminary work but couldn't decide what I wanted. When our log cabin burned, we hauled it to Canada and placed it under our porch. After being chosen for the one-woman show, I dug it up along with some earth, stones and ice, and was finally able to lug it into the cabin. It took two days to thaw after which I set it on my table to study. As I chipped away, a woman in a billowing poncho emerged, inspired by the walking meditation at the retreat I had attended. It took another month of rasping, shaping and sanding until she could stand on her own, balanced in her stride. The polishing made her come alive and breathe for the first time.

One morning I walked in to the meditation room with swollen eyes from last night's tears. While I was in the kitchen doing chores, Elizabeth seemed short with me. I had asked Shirley for some wisdom so as not to be upset about her impatience. She said to discuss it with her and to label it with whatever feelings it brought up. "Rejecting, rejecting, rejecting." Shirley came over during chores and asked how things were going. I told her I was trying to work on myself. I was also thinking about having to leave the next day, feeling it was too soon. She said it might be a good idea to mention that to the group. I was trying desperately to stay in the present and be calm. But suffering was what it was all about. So I welcomed the turbulence to remind me that nothing was perfect. When Anne led the loving kindness meditation, tears spilled down my cheeks. They seemed stored somewhere, motivated to move at certain times - like when we were told to love and be kind to ourselves.

At the beginning of that last evening session, somebody opened the curtains across the room and I was sitting in the direct path of an ugly glaring light. I became itchy, couldn't sit still and after one of the ladies left, I did too. Shirley and Anne asked how I felt. I didn't know. Then offhandedly I mentioned that the orange light shining in the window of the meditation room annoyed me. It made me angry. So that's what it was. I blamed it on the itchiness. Had I known I was angry, I could have labeled it and maybe had other options. It then would have been more under my control. But I didn't want to be "angry" so I blamed my not being able to sit calmly on my itchiness. Misplaced anger. Why hadn't I simply closed the curtains or just moved my spot? Rather than asserting myself, I made myself crazy. I wondered how much I internalized rather than admitted. Will I always be afraid to express my feelings for fear of being given away again?

On the final day of the retreat Elizabeth joined our circle. We all got to tell our tales and then moved into the dining room for our last meal together. She presented me with a beautiful macrobiotic meal and dessert, which brought tears to my eyes.

We would work out our conflicting feelings at some time I was sure.

MARRIAGE OF THE MILLENIUM

ॐ 2000 ॐ

Although Al Gore received many more votes than George w. Bush, it was Bush who became President. The Constitution required that the winner be decided by each state's electors. Because the electoral vote was so close the result was going to be decided by the electors of the state of Florida where Bush's brother was the governor. In the limited recounting Bush came out ahead by only a few votes. The Supreme Court refused a reexamining of the vote because they were determined to see Bush as President.

Researching the 1940's, '50's, and '60's with one war after another and the terrible hardships humanity underwent had gotten me very depressed. I was trying to find out about the consciousness of the country in which I was raised. People's cruelty and ignorance was unforgiving; the Japanese internment camps in the United States and Canada; the Axis against the world; the travesty of the Vietnam War; the dishonesty of the government; the military budget; the treatment of Native Americans, the poor, women and children; and it goes on.

It was New Year's Eve. We had chosen to be home alone but hearing the festivities the world over made me lonesome. My kids were away: Elizabeth cooking for eighty people at the Kushi Institute; Valerie and her family on a ski vacation; and Susan somewhere in the west on a sail boat. We listened to the radio to hear a review of the last century but the CBC's programming of the New Year's celebrations was stupid and superficial. All year we had heard depressing news of hijacking, murders, kidnapings, hurricanes, floods, earthquakes and now with a chance for some good newscasting, only meaningless messages. Even Y2K never happened. The broadcasters had lost their ability to talk about happy matters and had nothing to say unless some disaster or violence had occurred.

I hadn't been smiling much during the last days of December, but when I walked up to our outdoor phone booth to check for messages, it was comforting to hear Elizabeth's sweet voice. Hearing from her always lifted my spirits. On New Year's Day we called our close friends and two other daughters and wished them well on their answering services. Valerie phoned at our pre-arranged time and Caroline told me she loved me. My spirits lifted again and I didn't feel so alienated. Writing about rootlessness made me feel that way.

Then our neighbors dropped by and she mentioned she had been depressed for the last few days. When they left I talked about all the things that might have been on my mind, and it came down to my feelings about my middle daughter, how estranged we were, how we couldn't seem to get it together and probably wouldn't in this lifetime. Susan's remark to Valerie, that the next time she would see me would be in my grave, frightened me. With an outlook like that, no reconciliation was possible. A psychic had once told me many years ago that I would get two of my daughters back. She may have been right.

On April 9th we suddenly heard that wonderful whisper of spring; the creek was running, the temperature was on the rise, and the snow was almost gone. I was sitting at the window staring out at the trees, the marsh and the mountains, trying to make out the moments of my life that would give me a picture of who I was. I was so engrossed that Steve complained I wasn't around anymore. I had stopped communicating. I felt it too. I was immersed in reading about those years without my two older children, letters we wrote to one another, phone calls they made to me, and the pernicious presence of their father. So I took a day off and we went out to enhance the view from our cabin. We'd been talking of clearing some trees but found it difficult to actually cut them down.

Valerie and her family came to visit and left Caroline with us for a week. We drove to town, rented cross-country skis for her and spent a few hours every day in the woods, on the marsh and along the river. We introduced her to Shirley Temple movies and every evening, cuddled up on our couch, she watched in wonderment. We had her all to ourselves and enjoyed playing grandparents for a change.

One day when she and I walked up to our phone to check messages, I was shocked to hear Susan's voice on our answering service. She was going to be in Calgary within two days, it wasn't much notice but she had just found out about her trip. That evening I called the hotel where she would be staying and left a message to call at 6:00 p.m. the next evening and I'd be at the phone. About five minutes after the hour, as I was about to return to the cabin the phone rang. I listened to her talk about her job, traveling, their apartment, that she had plenty of money and they were both doing well. She became familiar so quickly that I found it disarming. We hadn't talked for over two years. I was excited because I had always been the one to initiate an interchange. I wondered if she wanted to get together or was just covering her bases as she said she liked to do. We couldn't get to see one another but maybe some other time. I walked down to the cabin debating whether or not to tell Steve about our conversation. We were having such a good time with our granddaughter, I didn't want to disturb the sweet balance.

The next afternoon I told him about the call; I had awoken that morning with a slight raw throat which got worse as the day went on. We finally talked about why I hadn't told him. Rather than the excuse I used, perhaps there was an attempt on my part to deny the reality of Susan's close presence in Calgary, so near to where we spent so much of our time. Did I really want to see her? Did Steve? Had I deluded myself into thinking she might be coming back into my life? Was I embarrassed at my delusion? Was I afraid of being hurt again? We hadn't seen one another since the death of my father, six years ago, and I still felt resentment for her in my heart. Did she understand that what she had done was wrong? Or had she denied, perhaps even forgotten, lying to me about sending a check to cover the money my father had loaned to her and her husband, so that I could conclude dealing with his estate. Could that be causing her to feel guilty and be overly familiar with me? I felt an apology was in order.

In my morning meditation I had a flash of the back of a hand reaching into the frame of my

consciousness, picking up a puzzle piece and withdrawing, becoming veined as it pulled out of my vision. Was my life an unfinished puzzle and my birth mother's piece there at one time but then removed? We talked at breakfast and I realized today was Susan's birthday! My first feeling was that the hand was her father's, plucking her from me years ago. She was not a part of my life; the puzzle was still incomplete. I knew it had to do with her in some way.

An adoptee doesn't have a choice but to view the world from a search mode. What traits had I transmitted to my children? What traits had been transmitted to me? Elizabeth easily fell into identifying with another mother as she had done with her aama in Nepal. In one of her letters to me from Nepal she had written extensively about her aama and how she felt as if she were part of the family and how her aama wanted her to remain in Nepal and marry somebody in the village. Susan had negated her real mother and replaced me with two other mother-figures, rather than making an attempt at reconciliation. Valerie had identified with her mother-in-law and even though her husband didn't get along with his mother, she pushed for a relationship. A girl looking for her mother the way I am looking for mine. This was the legacy I had left my daughters.

"The hurt and pain experienced in the mother/daughter bond is carried into the whole of a woman's life, a burden from the past - haunting, limiting, debilitating. The mother/daughter relationship is one of the most intense relationships a woman ever experiences. It is strong and it is primary." ¹

Later that month Susan called again. When she heard we were driving east for our second consultation with Michio Kushi, she thought we could visit. I said I would keep in touch.



At the beginning of June, after the garden was planted and with our neighbors having promised to water when the weather warmed up, Steve and I left for Calgary for a few days before our trip to Wyoming and then to the Kushi Institute. At 4:00 a.m. the phone rang and Susan's voice came across the wire apologizing for having wakened us. She hadn't realized the time change and called again at 7:30 a.m., wanting to talk. When I told her we would be passing through Ontario in a few days, she said she wasn't going to be there because of a business trip out west. She gave me all their telephone numbers in case anything changed.

The next morning we left for Jackson, Wyoming for an exciting event - we were going to tie the knot after twenty-five years. Bonnie, one of our dearest friends and a Justice of the Peace, was going to marry us. We arrived at her house in the early evening and planned for the wedding to take place in two days on her lawn amongst her beautiful trees and flowers. The next day, Cindy, another of our good friends, came to visit and when Bonnie came home from work, seeing that we had one witness and all we needed was another, suggested not waiting, afraid we might change our minds. She managed to get one of her friends to join us and at 7:00 p.m. Steve, in his new grey baseball cap and I, in my new white T-shirt, jeans and bare feet, holding a lilac bouquet Bonnie had put together, said our "I do's" as we stood on a carpet of soft green under a flowering crabapple tree. She had performed this function hundreds of

times but, having known us for almost a quarter of a century, she could not keep tears of joy from falling at our wedding.

Early the next morning we left for our honeymoon cruise across the country to Massachusetts, where we would stay at Carol and Alan's again. During our ride I realized that instead of stopping at my cousins in Ontario, we could do it coming back and then possibly meet up with Susan who lived a few hours away and might be back from her trip.

We arrived four days later in time for our friends to drive with us to the Kushi Institute in Becket at Elizabeth's dinner invitation. It was a wonderful reunion and after the weekend, she joined us for our appointment at the Kushi House in Boston.

Michio Kushi remembered us well and we talked for about an hour and a half, while Elizabeth and one of his scribes took notes. He found us healthy with our kidneys still needing a little love and attention. We could widen our diet now to include more fruit, fish, a little oil and tempura, but we still had to eat much of the same dishes, cooked more lightly because of summer. I asked him about resentment. He said, "From day to day, there is new life through food, and as the blood changes, cells change and organs change. After seven years all memories change. If you resume the old style of eating, all memories will return."

Our session seemed to pass so quickly. I called Susan from the Kushi House and left a message that we would be at my cousins' home in Ontario on Wednesday evening. We returned to Elizabeth's house in Becket, packed up that night and left early in the morning. It was late afternoon when we arrived at my cousins' and I waited until 9:00 p.m. to hear from Susan. I finally called her. She was just leaving to pick up her husband and was unyielding as far as taking any time off. They were both nine-to-fivers, she said belligerently, and didn't I understand that some people had to work? She was coming to Calgary in three or four months and maybe we could get together then. She sounded resentful and unhappy and I got off the phone feeling very frustrated. Her obstinance cloaked my clarity and I became disoriented. Did I really want to see her? Was I relieved that our meeting was postponed? I knew I would have to wait for my feelings to filter through the resentment that so easily came between us.

I couldn't stop thinking about my middle daughter. After I got over my reluctance at exposing my need to unite with my children, I told Steve I wanted to see Susan. He thought for a moment and then said he'd do anything I wished. The support I desperately needed was in place.

I called Susan. Her voice sounded cheerful, so unlike the previous evening, and when I suggested we meet midway, she thought it was a good idea and would try to work it out.

When I came down to the kitchen, Becky smiled, impressed at my perseverance, and Saul gave us directions to Cambridge and the Knotty Pine Restaurant. Susan called on her way to meet her husband and said she'd call again when they were on the road. Steve and I prepared our dinner in case the restaurant food was unacceptable for our diets, and we left

after we heard from them, arriving to find the restaurant closed for renovations. A cop told us about a place that had a salad bar and as I headed back to the car, there was Susan walking towards me. She looked shorter than I had remembered. We hugged, a meaningful warm embrace, and I felt she was glad to see me. I relaxed a bit. We decided to spread a blanket on the grass beside the stream at the back of the closed restaurant, order a pizza for her and Roger after she saw what we were eating and have a picnic. Their dinner was delivered in forty-five minutes by a man who thought it was very unusual to be delivering a pizza to a parking lot. He even had a few dog biscuits for their dog. Nice touch!

She had brought her photo album of their African trip and while looking through it, I was dismayed to find some pictures of her father, as well as Caroline and Valerie. Why would she do that? There could be a number of reasons; to show us that she too was part of the family I saw regularly, or that Caroline had another grandfather whom she also visited; or to rub our noses in it all. Had I not been so intimidated by life I might have asked. As dusk turned to dark, we kissed goodbye and parted.

I reflected on our visit and my feelings. Susan was studying the piano as had I and my mother before me, was patient with her job and was saving money. Roger was warm and talkative, correcting her occasionally when she got off track. She sounded confused at times, revealing a puzzled perspective of past events while her defense mechanisms shadowed the reality of our lives but ultimately left her unaware. When faced with a truth, she reacted like a little girl turning a deaf ear. I saw her more clearly than ever before, for time had created an objectivity that superseded the mother-daughter bond. I was wary of her, but my heart warmed to my middle daughter's presence again in my life. I could easily be led down the garden path of dreamy abandon, believing all was well, but the irrevocable past was too present. People capable of deceit answered their own needs first, and usually forgot or denied their immoral behavior. To be forewarned is to be forearmed and forgetfulness leads to illusive living: "everything's fine," when it's not.

I was quiet on our drive back to my cousins' home, emotionally drained, an- anesthetized in a vacuum of time - the present and the past were one. Who was she? Was she sincere? I loved her still. Did she love me? I believed her call to Calgary at 4:00 a.m. was indicative of her desire to see me. Why did she want to meet? I'm not sure yet.

It's a mother's dilemma, unconditional love, unencumbered by the vagaries of life, and so we have no safety net, no safe harbor for our heart. When our children don't check in, we become confused and easily shaken to our roots, and if those roots are anchored in loose, rocky soil, like mine, they are easily exposed; the roots dry up and we die inside. On the other hand, with a firm foundation, one cannot shake those roots loose even in turbulent times. Only lightning can split a tree trunk - such is divorce, a most difficult rupture of the fabric of life, so painful that we build walls for protection so as not to feel the pain. Gradually these walls weather and the experience that placed them there is transformed, partially forgotten, and life goes on. Those walls are exposed only when one peels off the paint and gets to the actual structure itself, untouched under its protective coverings. All the rawness and grit of the original material is revealed, must be realized, admitted, accepted. Then the walls can be torn down,

the area illuminated, and life can once again blossom.

We left my cousins' house the next morning and headed for Tobermory and the Chi-cheemaun Ferry that would take us between Georgian Bay and Lake Huron to Manitoulin Island and the Trans-Canada Highway. From there we began our west-ward journey, homeward bound, with our first night at a small motel just outside Sault Ste. Marie. Forty kilometers south of Wawa in Lake Superior National Park, we passed a dead moose on the side of the highway, reminding me of our intrusion into their wilderness. Rock outcroppings of the Canadian Shield crested with green trees, sparsely inhabited, nebulous silhouettes in a grey, misty fog. At Shabaqua we left Highway 1 and continued through Canada, rather than crossing into the United States. Winnipeg motels were booked because of some festival and we were forced to push on for another exhausting fifty miles through the rain to Portage la Prairie. The next day we would be in Calgary. The drive through Canada was mellow, so different from our trip through the States. The thing I thought would never happen, did: I had seen my middle daughter again.

I WANT TO GO HOME

When Elizabeth mentioned that she wanted to go for a hike in late August, I became excited and at her suggestion of the Wind Rivers, I was thrilled. We hadn't walked in the Winds for the last seven years since moving to Canada. When Valerie heard we were going, she wanted to join us. I instantly thought if Susan were with us, I would have my three daughters back together. Wishful thinking. I fell so easily into denying we had been estranged for twenty-five years.

As the weeks slipped by, Valerie's interest waned and she finally reneged. A visit with her father and her cancelation of our trip had coincided. So what's new?

Elizabeth and her current boyfriend, on his way to Oregon, were driving across Canada from Massachusetts. We all would have a few days together at our cabin before he continued west and Elizabeth and I headed south for Wyoming and my beloved Winds.

The west was drier than it had been in years. I called the Outdoor Shop in Pine- dale, and learned that two nearby fires were almost under control. The entrance at Elkhart Park was closed, as well as the south entrance to Yellowstone, and there was a large burn just outside of Dubois, nowhere near where we were going.

After thirteen hours on the road we pulled into Bonnie's driveway and unloaded our gear onto her living room floor. She watched in amazement as we figured out our food for the trip, packed our backpacks and ran through our age-old list, making sure we had everything. She wanted to try on our packs to see what it was like and was satisfied to discover that this was nothing she ever wanted to do. We loaded the car, turned down her offer of a tiny radio so we could hear the weather reports, and climbed into bed, too weary and restless for sleep.

In Hoback Canyon, ten miles south of Jackson, fire-fighting camps lined the highway and heavy smoke screened the landscape. As the haze cleared, two sand- hill cranes materialized in a meadow and watched us drive by, unconcerned at all the activity around them. The meadow where we parked was far enough away from the site of the fires and we felt relieved. The day was clear, warm, and slightly windy as we began hiking up the ridge on an unmarked trail until it disappeared. Making our way through an old burn, we stopped to have a snack on a deadfall pine, and then pick up the path only to lose it again. The going was extremely difficult and my legs were becoming badly scratched as we climbed over fallen trees and struggled through the underbrush, balancing our heavy packs. We were getting very tired and dejected because we couldn't find the trail. The guy at the Outdoor Shop had told us about this shortcut, saying we would see Burnt Lake to our right and to stay high on the ridge. What ridge? We couldn't figure out why our compass registered south when we were heading north and then realized it was magnetically screwed up.

Well into the afternoon Elizabeth was tempted to turn back, change our topo map and head for

another entrance. I considered that a good idea. We finally decided to drop our packs and scrambled up to the top of the hillside to take a look around. Another ridge and more trees worried us. Although we could finally see the Wind River peaks in the distance, where was the Timico Lake Trail? Exhausted and disheartened, we talked about camping at the bottom of a steep, grassy, congested ravine, but decided to hike up once more and take another look. Elizabeth ran up ahead and minutes after disappearing over the top I heard her excited yells that she had found the trail - a real trail with hoof and boot prints.

Energized by the sheer joy of discovery, we pressed on towards Lake Jacques line, where we had been told there was good camping. Elizabeth found a beautiful spot ringed with trees above the lake, already in shadow. It took minutes for our tent to go up, then much longer to hang our heavy bags of food. My university physics came in handy and I moved up the hill, so the angle wasn't so acute, and, while she held the bag, giving it a final heave, I pulled it up. It was twilight when we heated water for tea and finished the last of our tofu rice rolls from lunch. Our sleeping bags warmed our chilled bodies as we stretched out, thankful to be where we were. My shoulders were sore, my calves scratched raw, and tender hip bones kept me on my back while I experienced a condition well beyond exhaustion. She fell asleep while I listened to the sounds of silence that wilderness yields.

Suddenly a far-off rumbling shattered the serenity. I lay still and listened. There it was again, a bit closer. It wasn't long before lightning lit up the tent and the first drops sputtered on our rain fly. This was our first night in our new tent and a good way to test its efficiency. Thunder ripped the air, crackled, groaned and rumbled overhead while the lightning never let up. It rained for about a half-hour, welcoming us back to the Winds and outdoor life.

The next morning we headed towards the Bell Lakes Trail, which would eventually lead us to the Baldy Lakes Trail and our next campsite. Mt. Baldy loomed ahead and as we approached the turnoff, we noticed a yellow triangular tent below the wooden sign and wondered why those hikers camped in such an exposed site. A climb of six hundred feet over two miles brought us to the cutoff to the Lakes - hot sun, sparse clouds and short gusts of wind - and with only a mile to go, all up, we turned into the narrow bosky canyon. When we finally lowered our packs to the ground, my rubber flip-flops that had been secured to my backpack were gone. When I had tied them on this morning, I had a fleeting thought I should have clipped them onto the strap. Why don't we listen to our instincts? Elizabeth lent me hers but I couldn't imagine spending the rest of the trip without them. We pitched the tent, stashed our gear and although we were very tired, hiked to the head of the valley to stretch our legs. It was wonderful walking without weight. While cleaning our pots at the lake, a hiker came by and I asked if he had seen a pair of flip-flops on the trail. I was surprised when he said he had and knew Elizabeth thought me mad when I decided to retrieve them. With twenty minutes until sundown, I was off, running down the twisting trail into the treed gully, dodging rocks and deadfall. There they were. I was back with my bounty as the canyon dipped into soft purple-grey shadow.

Was it a bugling elk or a yelping coyote that we heard when we climbed into our sleeping bags at the end of another long day? The ground was lumpy and I changed sides with Elizabeth because, as she said, she could sleep on anything, an amazing faculty when it came to

outdoor living. I slept for two-hour intervals during the calm, clear, starry night, but my pondering didn't match the peacefulness of my surroundings. I thought about a dream I'd had a few years ago: I had a child, left it, and when I returned, the realization as to what I had done left me chilled. It was very frightening and the dream image had clung to my consciousness. Then Elizabeth told me what Michio Kushi said when asked about adoption during their talks on ancestry and roots. He said that if a person neglected a child in one of their past lives, it would be the reason for them to be adopted this time around so as to experience "neglect." The word "neglect" was disturbing and left me feeling worthless.

We stayed in bed until the sun came up the next morning and talked about our pasts. I had tears in my eyes when I reminisced about leaving my daughters behind, and she spoke about how alone and miserable she was after coming west without her sisters. I guess we all were except that Steve and I had an escape - smoking dope made our burden easier to bear. She knew that when we smoked she'd be on her own and hated it. We always told her it made us more creative and she thought that was true. But it was an addiction, and answered a deeper need. More tears. Hearing her account of our marijuana use made me feel guilty and in an effort to explain, I told her I couldn't deal with my life without smoking back then. We had never discussed our real feelings after the divorce although we had certainly thrashed through the events time and again. I talked about the first trip back east to see my parents after having been gone for years and the almost inedible packaged rice dinner my mother prepared, and how, when I asked about my adoption, my mother spoke excitedly about the day I arrived while my father stared into his plate and finally stopped her; and how controlling she became while having afternoon tea with old friends, and because she wanted to leave, we had to get up and go. I hated them at the time and she was surprised to hear me speak so candidly about my parents.

Hi wonder how aware children are of their parent's needs. How aware was I of my mother's? Perhaps a little but not enough to give up pursuing my own selfish de- sires. Do children ever regard a parent as a person? Do they realize how little they know us? Did I know my mother? For the most part I think I did. But did I know her enough? Course not. I was too involved with my own life." ¹

My journal:

Two women in the woods, With their necessary goods, Talking truths, admitting lies, From childhood years, times gone by, Tears of grief rolled down my cheeks, The sun rose over mountain peaks.

A waterfall tumbling through a rocky hillside gully across from our campsite beckoned and compelled me to sketch our tent, minute against the massive mountainside, while Elizabeth dozed. Nobody ventured into the valley all day and it was pleasant to be in such a private place. My watch battery died during the evening and again I couldn't tell when daylight was due, always a comfort to me. She re- called having a time window on her camera, so all we had to do was find out what time it was and then figure out how to set it. It took another few days until that happened.

We left early in the morning and climbed 300 feet to the open, grassy slopes of the 10,840' saddle overlooking broad, wild Bald Mountain Basin, a place to which we had promised to return. High, heavenly Angel Pass to the east, Tit comb peaks, Cook and Wall Lakes to the north. We walked back and forth searching for a camp- site in this vast, barren, rocky realm dotted with small ponds and lakes and finally made a choice. The lake just below our site was murky and we walked to another to filter water. I shared some of Elizabeth's ume sho-kuzu drink, a soothing, warm macrobiotic mixture that aided digestion by stimulating the intestines and alkalizing the system. She fell asleep while I sketched the angel's wings. Something had changed between us. She seemed distant.

Elizabeth's journal:

I knew something was going to happen. I was impatient, carrying a remark she made yesterday in my gut, unable to voice how I felt. Why can't I just say something and relieve this pressure?

While sitting on the rock by our tent watching the mauve-and-red-streaked sky dissolve to dark grey, we talked about a walk tomorrow and decided to let the weather dictate our direction. It got chilly quickly and after storing our food in her backpack, wrapping it in a rubber poncho with a plastic garbage bag pulled down over it, and placing it against a rock about fifty feet away from us because there were no trees to hang it from, we retired to the tent.

I mentioned that I didn't like some of the things I had done in the past and that in my writing these issues were coming up, forcing me finally to deal with them. I found her questions vague and intimidating and when I attempted to answer them, she impatiently cut me off, saying she had heard all the stories before. I stopped talking.

Elizabeth's journal:

"Is there something wrong?" Mom asked, her age and experience giving strength to ease this moment, this crucial opening to matters of the heart. "Yes," I said, as if caught. In the darkness tears ladled from the well of my wind-burned eyes, my throat swelled and in overwhelmed words and bitter accusations, I brought up our whole past in avoidance of what really was on my mind - another boyfriend of mine falling short, of what she says, I deserve. I didn't want to let her in, but wished to hurl every one of her wrong-doings in her face. I wanted to make her feel her mistakes in order for my problems to be justified. She broke from the 'norm' following a dream. I know it saved any vestige of happiness she could have in this life. My sisters still blamed her ... did I? How am I to open my heart if I can't be up front with the one woman who has been my best friend since before time? Is it worth blaming, still, the shortcomings and hard knocks her gentle soul has endured ... and mine?

She talked about a visit to Cape Cod with her father and sisters just after the divorce, a disturbing time for me. I was surprised at hearing the whole story, so different from what she had recounted before. Some startling things seemed to have happened that nobody wanted me to know about ... like their father and his homosexual friend going skinny dipping while leaving his daughters alone on the beach. She suddenly asked why I had never gone for

therapy. During the separation I had gone to get some questions answered. The psychologist told me I needn't come back, that I knew quite clearly what I was doing. After my visit I took the children to the therapist because of their hostility towards each other and me. I responded to Elizabeth's question saying I didn't have any money and she asked how we bought our dope. I stammered about having a lot of other expenses and felt threatened about being challenged as to why I did the things I did and didn't do. She fell asleep and I cried. I was using more tissues than we had accounted for and worried about running out. I wanted to go home. I didn't need this trip anymore. What I needed was good feelings around me, and if we couldn't be supportive of one another, why push being together?

She had wanted to come on this trip and talk. We hadn't been alone together for almost two years. Perhaps this hike was too much or not enough, or not at the right time. She had a boyfriend and I could understand her preferring to be with him. However, in all our telephone calls she had persisted in making these plans with me. So here we were - together but estranged. She seemed mildly hostile, withdrawn and impatient. I was beginning to experience that old feeling of alienation. She complained of being tired, saying she might be doing too much and should have stayed in Calgary longer to rest up. But we didn't have that luxury. We had to get into the mountains as early as possible because it was the end of summer. I thought she felt the same way. Maybe we should just go home!

She was sleeping and I was upset. Whenever I talked about the divorce I got stressed. I didn't like to make excuses. She was blaming me just as her sisters had, and I felt defensive as I repeated the same old stories. Here I was after twenty-five years with the same awful feelings and that knot in my gut. I tried to remember the truth of what happened, devoid of blame, hatred and guilt. I didn't leave my kids - they left me. For whatever reasons, and I knew they thought they had good ones, they had made the choice to remain with their father.

I was shocked, felt victimized and couldn't get to sleep. The tears flowed, my nose was blocked and I continuously had to blow it, hoping perhaps that the noise would wake her so we could clear the air. Suddenly in the stillness of the night ...

Elizabeth's journal:

"Are you okay?" I asked sleepily. "I want to go home," she blurted, crying hard. My heart burst. I felt a burning in my temples and down my arms. Look what you did, a little voice inside said. I hurt the only person I love more than life itself and blamed her for something I cannot face - rejection. We talked into the night releasing some of the pain.

I felt terrible at her questioning me about not going for therapy. I worried that she was tired and that I had pushed for the hike. I was miserable and I wanted to go home. She calmly cut through my anxiety by suggesting that maybe we came into the mountains because we needed to talk it out, whatever "it" was, and I suddenly relaxed, realizing I could let go of my victim role and drop the fantasized threat to my insecure underpinnings. Then she told me that she pushed my buttons until I broke in order to instigate a confrontation. She needed to talk about something and forced me into bringing it about. Okay, I could understand that. So what did we need to face?

She resented the fact that I accused her of going with a guy who had cancer, another stupid-men-choice as she put it. What I felt strange about was that he hadn't told her about it and she had to find out from a friend. That had precipitated the feelings I expressed about her boyfriend and had shaped my thoughts about his character. I was just a mother concerned with her daughter's happiness and this was an issue that had to be faced. She felt I was disappointed in her. I wasn't. Didn't it bother her?

I then blurted out that I worried about crossing the divide and possibly getting stranded on the other side, but I didn't want to spoil our plans to climb Angel Pass and see the Brown Cliffs and Alpine Lakes. At this time of the year storms could move in that might endanger us. We had faced that years ago when we were forced out of the Winds in early September because of snow. I didn't want to talk about my divorce anymore because as much as I tried to deal with it, I still couldn't. I cried and we talked. We talked and I cried. I felt guilty about her sleeping on the uneven side. We had changed because she said she could sleep anywhere but then complained about it being lumpy. I was paranoid about having left the car in a meadow rather than at a marked trailhead, wondering if we'd ever find it again and if there was danger of encroaching fires. We both worried about the walk out and didn't want to repeat the difficulties we had on the way in. I cried some more and we talked on, finally deciding that neither of us wanted to push so hard. We had arranged an aggressive hike, having to cross the divide twice late in the season with heavy packs, and we were worried about the trip, each not wanting to disappoint the other.

Emotionally spent after baring our souls, I had to pee and Elizabeth accompanied me into the cold night air. Back in my sleeping bag I shook pretty badly for a while. I was wrung out. Then we noticed a half-moon had risen behind the left wing of Angel Pass and the stars were out, promising a clear day ahead. It must have been near morning when we finally fell asleep.

Elizabeth's journal:

The sky was turning apricot and pink. Bald Mountain Basin smelled fresh as we poked our swollen faces out of the tent, looked at each other, and kissed good morning - for it was a good morning. We decided to stay.

We poured over the maps to reorganize. No more climbing with huge packs. Elizabeth was tired. She hadn't had a break in the last year and a half. After completing her three levels at the Institute and spending the rest of her time working her tuition off as one of their head cooks, she had catered the week-long Summer Conference for 750 people and then drove cross-country to meet me in Calgary and drive to Wyoming. We may have started off on the wrong foot but were thank- fully open enough to change and restructure.

By this time the sun was overhead in a clear blue sky and with our revised plans and newborn attitude, we started out for a day hike to 11,600' Angel Pass. After climbing high on the southeastern crest of the basin we discovered, much to our surprise, that we weren't camped at Spider Lake but at one of the lower lakes. While up there we picked out a provisional approach to the pass, then started a steep descent to the shoreline to find the route on our

topo map, hopefully marked either by cairns or by a worn footpath. Elizabeth saw a person by the lake and I yelled and waved hoping to attract his attention so that I could ask about the fires. A father and his two sons were fishing. He pulled out a map and pointed out where the fires were, one under control and the other out. I recognized the map as the one that showed the first few miles of our first day, and asked if I could buy it from him after he said he didn't need it anymore. He couldn't sell it because it was a friend's and offered to loan it to us. I promised to mail it to him and we planned to meet the next day so that he could give us the map and his address. After getting the time Elizabeth figured out how to set her camera.

We followed our well-plotted path from up high but somehow, when down on the ground, the route was lost and gone forever. Continuing up a steep bouldered incline, we built cairns so as not to get stuck on a ledge during our descent. We finally scrambled over the last ridge into the vast rocky cradle of Angel Pass. I was as high as I wanted to be. With clouds gathering at our backs and the top still a distance away, she took the camera and continued the climb. I watched her wend her way amidst smooth rock ledges, gradually becoming smaller and smaller until she was a speck against a shocking blue sky and I heard her victory yell as she disappeared over the top. I waited, scanning the heights, and suddenly spotted her on the way down. It took over a half-hour for her to get back and we proceeded to perform a promised ritual for our friend Bonnie - to scatter her husband's ashes in the wilderness. He was one of our best friends and I felt grateful to be able to fulfill her request. I got ready to throw my half of the bag but broke down and had to wait for my tears to subside. "To our dear friend, who had a difficult time with life; we smoked a lot of pot together." I scattered his ashes over the surrounding rocks. Then she threw her half, very appropriately with an operatic outburst of "O Sole Mio." Richard was an opera buff. We spent a quiet moment, then started down. At the lake while she went swimming, I rinsed my hair in the icy water and then we sat on the rocks eating apricots and almonds as a soft wind whispered and the sun's warmth wrapped around us, reminiscent of childhood days. It was fun, life was worth living, and I felt lighter.

Back at the tent we collapsed on our mats for a rest before dinner. She dozed while I sketched the trees and read some Thoreau. Suddenly she awoke, looked over at me and said that somebody had just kissed her on the cheek. I smiled knowing very well who it was - there was no doubt in my mind - an angel named Richard.

The next morning, the sun warmed us while an arc of smoky grey cirrus clouds warned of fires far below. Coyotes cried in the distance and she mimicked their howls, instigating them to continue. At 10:28 a.m. the first jet broke the sound barrier as we roamed over smooth, amoebic rocks around the lower lakes. The jets continued at close intervals during lunch.

Suddenly we heard a shout from far-off. The fisherman and his boys had walked up to the basin from their campsite to give us his map and address. He asked if we had a Chopstick for his son's terribly chapped lips, and Elizabeth gave him one. When they heard we were staying for two weeks, they inquired about our pack horses and were surprised that we had carried all our supplies on our backs. Out of earshot, Elizabeth quietly whinnied like a horse. From her macrobiotic training she deduced that one of his sons had poor digestion, a bad liver inflamed and irritated from too much sugar and spicy foods. The dark, indented triangle between his

nose and eyes indicated kidney trouble, and she wished she could have told his father to change his son's diet before it was too late.

The skies were busy thoroughfares as the jets continued hauling humans to and fro around the world. Oblivious to the momentum of the multitudes outside these wilderness walls, I was amazed we could climb into the back country and stop time, or slow it down enough to enjoy the minutes and hours that made up a day.

As I sat sketching the fire pit I had noticed earlier, the creek sang behind me, the birds called in the trees, the clouds sailed overhead, the sun shone intermittently, the wind hardly subsided but shifted direction constantly, and the jets continued. Fourteen planes so far. This was jet-counting day and they confused the illusion of where we were; six more jets over dinner, three as we washed our dishes and two more while doing yoga as the sun sank, leaving the Angel's wings etched against a slate sky. A slight smell of smoke drifted south from a fire that started a few days ago at Green River Lakes. While in bed playing gin rummy, four more jets passed.

"The jet reminds us that the wilderness isn't endless, timeless, a way out." ²

At 8:00 a.m. the sky was clear, no smoke over the western ridge. Over breakfast we examined a route into a side canyon where a lake tucked into a cirque beckoned us.

Climbing northwest of Spider Lake, where blood-red rose crown flowers dotted sporadic patches of green amidst terraced, smooth, amber and beige rock mounds, we walked along the west side of two large lakes, stepping carefully on the rocks that ringed the shoreline. Around a bend, the largest of the lakes nestled against the back of the canyon.

Elizabeth's journal:

We hiked up a high open canyon, drawn like magnets, deeper into patches of snow and huge dough-like boulders. A beach! Could it be? We yielded to a soft and tangible world. A bagel, carrots, toasted almonds and dried apricots. Glacial water cold and slippery. This time immeasurable.

We ran through the sand, our footprints dotting the beach where none were before, and named Lake 10,950' Angel Beach. Short, sunny intervals and the sound of lapping water. A wonderful childhood memory came alive at that remote alpine lake on this August afternoon. I was seven years old visiting my favorite aunt in Maine on our yearly trip to the States for which I always waited with anticipation. Fresh cooked lobsters, late-night color television, playing in the ocean and jumping the waves, building sand castles and motes filled with water, delightful days frolicking on the beach.

Large billowing clouds rolled over the canyon walls hiding the sun's warmth, forcing us to leave, and as we reluctantly worked our way back over the boulders, their dark-stained, exposed surfaces showing how low the water level was, Elizabeth exclaimed as she glanced back, "Look how far we have to come for privacy." We picked mertensia leaves for dinner

greens while descending through sedimentary rocks coated with orange, red and yellow lichen. Between intermittent clouds, we washed in one of the lakes, then dried in the sun's warmth. Back at the tent we simmered millet, vegetables and shitake mushrooms that had been soaking while we were gone, then added pinto beans and our freshly picked greens to make an outstanding stew as the sun deserted the basin, leaving a stark, cold, clear landscape.

A sliver of moon cradled by Angel Pass highlighted against brilliant blue was our first glimpse of the next day. Reluctant to leave the world of dreams and soft, gentle sensations, we dozed while wisps of translucent cloud spun a lacy web overhead and the sun brightened the hazy backdrop of the eastern sky. As it rose, clouds quilted around the peaks and reached for the rest of the sky while a slight breeze rustled the rain fly. The stillness closed in around us. I listened, thinking an animal was approaching, but it was only the beat of my heart.

At 7:30 a.m. I went out to pee, took a moment to start a cup of oats and diced apples soaking and got back into my sleeping bag to savor the early morning hours and record my reflections. Elizabeth recounted her many dreams - feelings of invasion and indebtedness - and we talked about their likely origin: the divorce, the wanting to please, the inability to say no for fear of losing someone's, anyone's, love, and low self-esteem from having a father who had left her and a mother unable to come to grips with her adoption. Because of my own low self-esteem, I felt at fault for everything that went on around me, which is how she felt at the time of the divorce. She believed she was the cause of the separation and at the time I was so caught up in my own issues, I was not at all cognizant of hers.

We had been outside for eight days, and I felt weathered - parched, burnt, strong, vibrant, my fingernails underlined and hair matted. I didn't experience my usual early morning stiffness and wondered if it was the yoga, my diet, or the vigorous outdoor living that kept my blood pumping at a different pace, feeding the tissues and carrying away the toxic elements of a sedentary life.

The first vaporous contrail appeared over Angel Pass and moments later we heard the thunder of the jet's engines, passengers heading west to Salt Lake City and the coast for the Labor Day weekend, so much movement outside this mountainous kingdom. We loved our tough climb out of the bustle and strain of the civilized world, carrying only the necessities of life on our backs for some precious time on another plane of existence. Living from moment to moment, aware of changes in weather, the need for clean water, warm food and clothing, the ability to alter well thought-out plans, made for a full-time occupation. And the few days of doing nothing but strolling amidst the rocks and lakes of a ridged landscape, reading in a warm tent or drifting off into another dimension with a backdrop of chirping birds and a flutter of wings, a distant call of a hawk or a Clark's nutcracker, the whisper of the wind around a canyon wall or the rain fly - all of these pleasures reminded me that life was wonderful, that rest and relaxation were necessary, and that simply keeping busy wasted our lives in accomplishing nothing of importance. Our reason for existence is all too often overlooked for a false sense of security promised by societal demands for accomplishment and the accumulation of things. We need so little and acquire so much and in the process we miss the

wonders of the natural world. The birds actually made music, the wind soothed a troubled brow, the sun warmed us, the moon moved our emotions, and the mountains by their massive presence gave us security, which we strove for all our lives. Nature provided all if we were willing to take the risk.

After breakfast on the rock by our tent, I felt chilled even though I was wearing my duo folds, turtleneck, down vest, sweater and wool hat. The clouds obscured the sun and we watched for a break. This basin that floated beneath a limitless sky, visited by passersby who scarcely permeated its premises, was like a holding tank that lulled you into a semiconscious state of being. We were moving camp today, down three hundred feet to Cook Lakes.

There were volumes of clouds tumbling over the canyon ridges but the sun was out below. We took our last picture of Angel Pass from a lower perspective and continued down the narrow, rocky path lined with tall, wet grass that dripped on our boots and through the weatherproofing. Reaching the worn, wooden wilderness sign, we turned towards the lakes and within a mile or so reached the creek and the campsite we had enjoyed thirteen years earlier and settled into a familiar world.

Our tent went up, Elizabeth soaked some quinoa and vegetables, and we searched for a hanging tree - hard to find. Settling for a young spruce, we threw our weighted rope over the branches and when the rock hit the ground, pulled on both ends to see if the branch would hold our heavy bag. Dinner was delicious and, warmed by the sun, we sat against a huge boulder out of the wind and the few rain-drops that fell. We spread our washed dishes to dry on that famous flat rock I had been looking at in a photograph from our 1987 trip. As we talked on our rock, the lakes plunged into shadow, the sun dropped behind a darkened ridge, cloud bottoms turned red, and the lake was streaked with silver as fish bit for flies dimpling the glassy surface. We stayed until the alpenglow on the rocks faded and the valley turned grey and cold, about 9:00 p.m.

In the morning I watched the clouds envelope the sky through the tent opening. The sun was already shining in the basin above but here in the trees, we'd have to wait. By mid-morning we were on our way to Wall Lake. After a few undulating miles this oblong, charcoal-blue body of water, ringed by sheer rock walls, appeared far below. Cairns were comforting as we followed a faint route around a large steep outcropping that dropped to the water quite suddenly, a bit of an obstacle for me, and we finally descended to the flat, rocky ledges at the end of the lake where creeks from canyons off the divide gathered to become the headwaters of Pole Creek. A continuous cold wind sent us scurrying back to a sandy beach where Elizabeth tried in vain to get into the water but found the air too chilly. We luxuriated in our warm tent until dinner. A spectacular sunset sent me rushing for the camera to catch seven ducks in the lake flapping their feathers at the sky's brilliance. The clouds glowed red and gold against an aqua sky and stretched across the valley, like pulled taffy, into streams of tangerine, hot orange and blue. As soon as the colors faded, the air turned cold.

We talked again about leaving earlier than originally planned. We loved the wilderness but there was always that pull to get out and join the rest of the world. To do what? When we were

out, we wanted to be back in. We human beings have become human doings, having been brought up to do instead of to be. We decided to think about it tomorrow and to take each day at a time. Unfolding our maps, we studied that ridge, searching out how to stay high, counting the contours, trying to visualize the landscape, planning how to get down to our parked car. It would be a challenge.

I woke up around 2:00 a.m. and had a difficult time falling back to sleep. The creek drowned all sound but I listened anyway for footsteps, having to remind myself that the outside didn't change at night and all was well in the Winds. The time moved slowly and I must have dozed because it was bright when I next opened my eyes. Elizabeth had come to the decision that we shouldn't leave early. I too was over the pressure, especially when awakening to a blue sky and the certainty of a sunrise.

We talked about relationships and how some men put women down to build themselves up. Elizabeth's boyfriend would question her about something, refute her answer, only to find her right after somebody else confirmed what she said. It bothered her and she considered it a mild putdown. Steve sometimes did that to me. The fact that we allowed it to happen was the problem. We all had our needs and seeking to fulfill them at somebody else's expense caused suffering.

The sun's rays illuminated my beautiful daughter's face as she lay next to me in her sleeping bag writing in her journal as I read my book. She said she would love to see eastern Canada, especially Prince Edward Island. I told her about my travels in the Maritimes and about one of my affairs. She was getting to know all my secrets so perhaps, in turnabout, her skeletons could come out of the closet too. After all if her mother had led an unusual life, it couldn't be so bad for her to have done so as well. I felt relieved at unburdening myself to my daughter, secure in the fact that she would not be accusing or denigrating, that she would understand my dilemmas, what led me to do the things I did. She needed to know all about me.

My palms were stained and fingernails blackened with the dirt of the outdoors. We hadn't brought soap because just rinsing in the lakes usually kept us clean. Perhaps the grime of city living required more frequent cleansing, but out here the living was different. The wind didn't seem laden with toxins; the rain rinsed the dirt off our skin; the sun kept our bodies at a healthy temperature; and the odor of our sweat was carried away by the breezes.

A mix of oatmeal and rice with broken walnuts made a fortifying breakfast, as we sat in the sun, leaning on a fallen tree next to the murmuring brook. While walking behind Elizabeth yesterday, I noticed her shapely, youthful legs with skin so taut, as opposed to mine which didn't hold up as well anymore. Neither did I. I had ventured far and wide and was looser now, more open and aged. Walking in the wilderness had kept me young, able to carry a load, secure in the knowledge I had gleaned from years of outdoor living, with a willingness to take risks and make quick changes. Memories from all my trips were as clear now as they ever were and I felt fortunate to continue to find freedom in a world that has taken it away from so many of us. I should say rather that we have given up our freedoms to those who would take them away. Without our independence we were nothing and our lives were spent answering

not our own hearts, nor fulfilling our own needs, but those of others.

"The wilderness is good, but it is only a respite. Only the self-deluding could find Eden up here, knowing what we know. But this is my heart's country." ³

We left our campsite at 12:30 p.m. and headed for the sandy beach at upper Cook Lake. Elizabeth went in for a quick swim and came out just before another cloud passed overhead, bringing a cold wind. After two hours of easy hiking around the lakes, we were faced with the infamous and sometimes treacherous Pole Creek Crossing - deep and wide. We searched for the shallowest place and, after hanging our boots from our packs, crossed the rushing creek, holding hands. Back at our campsite I talked about how disappointed I was that, after twenty-five years of living together and finally getting married, none of my daughters had acknowledged our marriage. Not that I expected gifts or cards, but some gesture of acceptance would have been nice from my children. My granddaughter was the only one who enjoyed the idea of the marriage by planning a party for us when we were visiting her. Feeling guilty, Elizabeth asked if we were disappointed in her. I didn't want to hurt her feelings, knowing she would never purposely do anything to upset us. I hadn't consciously planned on saying anything about this, but it had been on my mind, and this was how I had to get to it, through the back door; I should have been more straightforward. She said she needed to know, that there shouldn't be any secrets between us, and if I didn't tell her she would end up making up something on her own, probably something worse. She was right, of course. Tears came to my eyes because I felt inadequate as a mother, not being able to level with my daughter. I worried about her love and she reassured me that she loved me more than anything else in the world. She hated to think we might talk about her behind her back and needed to know our feelings up front. Why was I afraid to be honest and tell her Steve and I had discussed it? It takes courage to voice your feelings and I didn't always have it. That old enemy, rejection, paralyzed me and my capacity to be candid vanished. I had been brought up to hide my true feelings and had a difficult time expressing myself for fear of being given away. I grew up with the anxiety of abandonment.

Quinoa, mertensia leaves, pintos, vegetables with miso for dinner and we talked more about our dilemma. It became easier for me to discuss this problem and our acute feelings subsided. After chores we climbed into our sleeping bags, exhausted, both physically and emotionally.

When I opened my eyes next morning Elizabeth's smiling face, upside-down outside the tent opening, made me smile as well, and the day began. After breakfast I sketched the flowers by the log we were leaning against, while she wrote in her journal. Because of the chill in the air, we decided to pack up and depart for lower elevations.

We joined the Highline Trail and headed towards Pole Creek Lakes, knowing we would be encountering hikers coming in from Elkhart Park, but we didn't care, having been alone for so long. Moving mainly through a forest of pine and spruce, we climbed an arduous ridge that brought us down to three formidable creek crossings and eventually into a large horse camp where there were two tents and a few people milling about. We headed southwest to Chain

Lakes, realizing we had circled Mt. Baldy, and, too exhausted to search for a suitable site - in this narrow valley with a creek running through the middle, and mindful of the fact that camping within 100 feet of the creek is prohibited - we luckily remembered where we had seen that yellow tent on the way in, and walked to the only campsite in the valley. We now understood, all too well, why those hikers had chosen that spot. Too worn out to eat all of our dinner, we placed the leftovers in the bag that had held the freeze-dried pasta, sealed it tightly with a hope that the smell wouldn't permeate the bag, and hung it far away from our tent. We pumped water and sat on a rock watching the clouds turn silver, blue and pastel yellow and finally fade to smoky grey as the sun dropped behind the ridge. Elizabeth seemed distant and when I asked about her moodiness, she said she felt totally introverted having written in her journal so much yesterday. She called me crabby and I agreed with her. Living in such close quarters, we had to communicate and not close down. I started to read by flashlight, feeling indulgent about using the batteries since we were at the end of our trip. She asked if I'd like to play cards. We lit a candle but resorted to the use of the flashlight while playing four games of gin rummy, all of which she won. She brought up the fact that she had decided not to stay with her boyfriend if he didn't try to work at curing himself, and we talked about why some people can cure themselves while others can't. Maybe with her support, something he never had from his family, who knew nothing of his condition, his energy and will to survive would be enhanced. I guess that had been on her mind, enough to have made her melancholy.

It was raining lightly at 7:00 a.m. Two hours later Elizabeth retrieved our food bag under a low ceiling which didn't look like it would lift. We warmed the left-overs and sat cross-legged in the tent catching up on our journals. Intermittent rain diminished to a drizzle and just before noon it stopped and we packed up. The landscape, muted in medium greys, and the grasses glowed orange and yellow as we hiked towards Barnes Lake - two miles on a muddy trail. My boots got wet instantly, so much for the waterproofing, but my duo folds under my turtleneck, down vest, sweater and poncho preserved the warmth generated by a hearty breakfast. We left the Highline for the Timico Lake Trail and suddenly, as we turned a bend, a huge bull moose, not more than twenty-five feet away, scared Elizabeth, who was ahead of me. He started towards us and just as we were about to run for a tree, he abruptly turned and took off into the forest. We talked loudly as we hastened past, checking back until we felt we were far enough away. It was raining lightly when the sign for Lake Jacqueline appeared, and since it was too early to stop, we continued to Belford Lake, wanting to get as close as we could to that illusive trail that would take us to our car. If we could find it and if the weather stayed clear we would make the attempt; otherwise, we would play it safe, forgoing the shortcut, and continue down to Meadow Lake and then figure out how to get back to our car.

We climbed a craggy hill and crossed a rocky plateau as the mist, eerie and ghostlike, enveloped us, muting all sound and color. As we left this shrouded, surreal highland and entered the trees, the remnants of Black's cabins and lake came into view. We lowered our packs onto the only dry spot under a tree and broke out the last of the rice cakes and tahini, devouring them as raindrops puddled around us. We found a site, cleared the wet pine needles, and erected the tent under a light drizzle. Hot tea warmed us and we knew we were in for a long, damp, cold night. When the rain stopped we hiked up the trail to locate the cairn we left on our way in and if we were lucky, find the trail which would lead us to our car. Just

past the cairn she came upon a well-worn path that disappeared into the woods and, following it for a while, decided it must be the one. We arrived back at the tent just in time for the next deluge, happy with the promise of being able to retrace our route in the morning.

After dinner Elizabeth built a fire to burn our trash, feeling it was safe to do so because it was so wet everywhere. As we luxuriated in its warmth, we heard voices and panicked, thinking somebody had seen the smoke. We hurriedly doused the fire with dirt only to find two hikers on their way to Cook Lakes. Their friend had forgotten his sleeping bag in Jackson, gone back to get it, and would be four and a half hours behind them. They told us there were no other cars at the Meadow Lake Entrance except theirs, so we knew that if we hiked to that lake, we would have a lot of walking to find our car. They set up their tent in the remains of one of the cabins and I was sure their friend would see ours first and think it was theirs. As the rain started again we climbed into our tent and played four games of gin rummy with the candles lit and the flashlight on, throwing all caution to the wind. We were dry and warm and excited about tomorrow.

It was around midnight when I heard footsteps and whistling and suddenly a flashlight pierced the night. I called out that this was the wrong tent, and we were immediately plunged back into darkness. The whistling kept on until it started to fade in the distance, and I realized that he had missed his friends' tent and walked on. I yelled again and again until one of them woke and went after him. When they returned, they were noisy for a long time.

It rained throughout the night and when I went to get the food bag, I was shocked to see how soaked the ground was. While Elizabeth made tea we planned our getaway, resigned to the fact that from the time we stepped out of our tent, we would be wet for the rest of the day. We lined our stuff up at the doorway, reluctantly pulled our damp cold boots on over dry warm socks, unzipped the tent and went for it. I handed our packs to Elizabeth, who was outside, and she placed them on her foam pad under a tree to try to keep them dry. Then we took the tent apart, stuffed it into its sack, surveyed our site to make sure nothing was left, and headed up the trail past the boys' tent which was in a pool of water.

The trail was muddy, full of puddles, and visibility was poor. We slid and sank in spots, our boots filling with water as we climbed past our cairn to the unmarked path and turned west into the fogbound forest, an alien land of fallen trees, thick underbrush and faint trails. Every time the trail vanished, we split up and searched until one of us found it again. Our eyes strained to pick out Burnt Lake below, but we weren't going to be that lucky. Down we went for hours, the trail at times well defined, at others just a slight depression, wandered around fallen logs, under bent branches of gnarled tree trunks, through scrub brush, and knew only that we had to stay high and head west. Suddenly she recognized a creek crossing, then the log we had stopped to rest on, and finally the long ridge where we had lost our way before. Relief mixed with joy. Even the rain had stopped. The trail wound around, still descending through sagebrush and rocks and the meadow we had crossed where the cows had congregated gradually became visible through the cloud cover. After three and a half uneasy hours, we were back down on flat ground. A strange feeling came over me that we hadn't been anywhere and that the whole trip was a dream. For a fleeting moment I felt disorientated. Walking, walking,

walking for so long, so many miles, so much emotion, such grandeur, so difficult to come down and "be here now."

I couldn't contain my excitement when, rounding a bend, we saw our car just as we had left it two weeks ago in this remote meadow. We were euphoric dropping our packs for the last time, taking off boots, peeling off socks, retrieving the car key so carefully guarded for so long. As I drove the long, ten miles over the rutted, rocky road, washed away in spots, we smothered our rice cakes, left in the car for just this moment, with the bit of tahini we had managed to save, and finished the last almonds and apricots. On the highway I felt removed and had to deliberately concentrate on the driving because I wasn't used to moving through space so quickly.

"Walking is the true speed of the soul and ... when we travel too fast, in cars and planes, we separate from our soul." ⁴

Elizabeth drove the rest of the way to Jackson. We stopped to call Steve to tell him we were out and safe. It was over for another year until the next trip when we would do it all again.

Elizabeth's journal:

She broke down in the middle of the night She wanted out had second sight tears of guilt that burned those cheeks burst and fell soaking the quiet night Behind this waterfall A relic worn down grief stricken so beautiful blazened with grey and black This steadfast earth-ship; A mother her own rig to grip satin smooth she goes clutching vestiges of tissues in piles they form soggy from the storm... half moon rises, she lies inside desperate for her home to reach desperate for the dark to cease.

THE SEARCH IS THE ANSWER

Elizabeth had come to a monumental decision - to visit her father whom she hadn't seen since she was eleven, twenty-one years ago. She left for the coast with a stop at Valerie's, and then went on to her boyfriend's apartment in Portland. She had learned at the Kushi Institute that in order to heal her body, she must first heal all her relationships; until then, her problems would persist.

I was apprehensive, a slight tightness bound my heart. I said a prayer and sent her light and love. This was a courageous endeavor. Knowing her boyfriend would be with her helped settle me.

Now I realized why we had fought in the Winds - one of the reasons why. When she decided she wanted to see her father, she started to do what her sisters had done - blame me to justify being with him. That's how we get around difficulties we can't deal with - by shifting blame.

For years I had been pleading with my older daughters not to interfere with their younger sister and her father. But, at his instigation, they tried, frequently and hopelessly, to get them together because of their need to please him. She was going to make her own decision as to how, when, and where it would happen. This was my maternal duty that had ruled my existence for twenty-eight years since the divorce. Would she recognize him? Would he intimidate her? Would he blame her for the past? These and a thousand other questions ran through my mind while I waited for her to call.

This meeting would go well, I was sure of it. The shadows in our lives were less threatening when a little light was let in. Perhaps a new pattern would emerge. There were a lot of possibilities - new energy, new beginnings, less fear and more room for love and acceptance.

Elizabeth's voice at the other end of the phone was light. She told me what I needed to hear. He was smaller than she had imagined, not the huge dark figure that had always loomed as a paralyzing presence in her dreams. He did blame her for having made it difficult for him to see her over the years. She admitted it would take her time to absorb the aftershock but she had finally faced one of her demons and hopefully her life would change.



"A deep identification with our forebears, as experienced originally in the mother- child relationship, gives us our most fundamental security." ¹

"Inside every adoptee is an abandoned baby. It lies coiled in the core of the adoptive self like a deep sorrow - that can find no comfort." ²

My life has passed, shadowed and secretive. It is a hopeless situation, not knowing where you come from, impossible to mature without the objectivity one gets when rooted in one's origins.

My search has taught me that whatever my two older children and I have lost can never be fully recovered. Much the same as it would be if I found my biological mother.

My oldest daughter, in the midst of a divorce, a reiteration of mine, cannot stop blaming me and the world for her problems. My middle daughter, unable to have children and too defensive to relate to me except superficially, declared adoption wasn't an option when I timidly made the suggestion. So I continue my desperate dynamics and am unable to make a change with them.

And Elizabeth and I struggle along, she to affirm herself and I to let go of my closest blood relative, the one who taught me with a hug what the mother-daughter bond was all about. I have fulfilled my most critical calling of being a mother, having raised a daughter who is my friend, who has accepted me into her life as I have opened mine to her. With a deep trust in our relationship, we have overcome the transient temperamental times. She seems to have inherited my fear of being abandoned and rejected. A woman's ability to let go can be traced to her feelings about her father. If she trusted him not to leave her - she'll trust the man next to her in bed.

"The child who grows up without the father who gave her life will feel abandoned and unprotected in the world." ³

You're stoic, like your real mother, carrying so much guilt with your children that you don't feel worthy of their love and respect. You felt you weren't there for them. But they need to take responsibility for themselves. Part of your block is you have felt displaced and are experiencing all the frustrations of your adoptive parents, then putting them out to your children; and so you have alienated them. They feel towards you as you feel towards your parents. Since you have experienced both sides of the spectrum, you can teach them how to be responsible for their own actions.

Psychic reading by Tony Jolley, 2002



I am blessed in living with a man whose love and support has encouraged me to be positive about acknowledging my adoption. He has stood by me through a horrendous divorce when even my closest friends deserted me. Even though my adoption had been a painful burden to me for forty-eight years (until I started talking about it), it has become a genuine learning experience. I now ask myself, instead of why was I adopted, what can I learn from having been put up for adoption?

Why did I choose to be adopted? Maybe that's more important. What am I here to learn? Michio Kushi said it had something to do with neglect. In a previous lifetime I neglected a child

and now I am here to learn what it felt like. My birth- parents neglected me. I can work with that.

I don't hold sacred what other women do - matching dishes and linens, new clothes, jewelry, weekly dinners and close family ties. My adoptive parents' de- sires weren't mine. I tried to be like them to please them, but trying to conform made me angry. That anger was unacceptable and to this day is so inhibiting, so impossible to express, and perhaps the reason that I couldn't find a medium in which to express myself until I discovered marble. I could swing a hammer, wield a chisel, and chop away my anger, my feelings of isolation, my alienation. Artists often live an unstructured existence outside the confines of society. We work alone and feelings of loneliness are prevalent. I know now that where I originally came from has something to do with my strife.

"In returning to observe adoptees after years in their adoptive homes, I have seen that they are still largely the offspring of their biological parents, not only in out- ward appearances but in their interests and character." ⁴

"Adoptees don't have the same relationship to things that other people have. This disconnection they have experienced has made them devalue things that others hoard and treasure." ⁵

"Rage turns into sorrow; sorrow turns into tears; tears may fall for a long time; but then the sun comes out. A memory sings to us; our body shakes and relives the moment of loss; then the armoring around that loss gradually softens; and in the midst of the song of tremendous grieving, the pain of that loss finally finds release. In listening to our most painful songs, we can learn the divine art of forgiveness. Both forgiveness and compassion arise spontaneously with the opening of the heart." ⁶

Adoptive families are different. I don't know my origins and therein lies the problem. Medical history? Anything hereditary would have turned up already. I feel frustrated being at the mercy of outdated laws and apathetic advocates. The most backward of provinces, states and countries will be the last to open records. If my adoptive parents are dead, whom are they protecting and why can't I get some information?

"Simply by a release of adoption records to all grown adoptees on demand, the secrecy and concealment which distorts adoption today could be broken. The agencies, the courts, the doctors and the adoptive parents faced with the eventuality that facts formerly hidden will be revealed, will have to substitute candor for concealment and honesty for distortion. Adoptive parents will more readily face the fact that their adopted children are not their possessions, that they are born in one heritage, raised in another and will emerge as adults into the larger world which belongs equally to everyone." ⁷

"I believe I have looked for my mother in every woman I have ever known." ⁸

I have been searching for that elusive birth mother of mine for a long time. Unable to get information from established sources, I have been forced to turn to alternative methods. Through psychics, hypnotists, an iridologist, an alternative optometrist, a psychic doctor, a nutritionist, a psychotherapist, a Hawaiian kahuna and a quantum healer, I have composed a profile of my birth parents:

I am a Lemurian (from the island of Lemuria which sank before Atlantis), an old soul with an interesting bloodline. My ancestry hails from northern Europe - north of the equator. They were short, hardy people known for their stamina and strength.

My real mother was very young and scared when she was pregnant with me. A lot of secrecy was involved. She was somehow related to my adoptive family and my adoption fit in well with them because they wanted a child and she could still hear about me. Her long, light brown hair was pulled back in a bun and my features are similar to hers. Her face wasn't as long as mine, it was more round. I got the length of bone from my father. My mother was petite, gentle, soft-spoken, kind, with a big heart and bubbly energy. She was an artist and an ardent diarist. A Christian, perhaps Roman Catholic. Because of the rich, refined food she ate, it weakened my stroma (the framework of an organ) which indicates a predisposition to degeneration. A weakness in my female organs was inherited which will come out in my children or grandchildren. The weakness from my mother on a meta-physical level showed up in my teeth. She worried a lot. She was generous and couldn't say no and because of that she was burning herself inside. This resulted in weakness in my spleen area, not enough pancreatic enzymes. Sometimes she put on a happy face even though she wasn't happy. She was the earth mother - nurturing, giving, producing.

My birth father was a very emotional man. He wasn't talkative and was hard to get to know. He always had private thoughts but was very inquisitive. He was strong, quiet, clever, clear thinking. He was regimented, a doer, but more a thinker than a doer. When he was a little boy, he was frightened about some things, perhaps life, and he carried this fear throughout his lifetime. His inability to express himself entered into his urinary tract (kidney, bladder, prostate) and a bit of this constitution was brought to me. Something always stayed with him - fear, anger, suppression.

Their ancestors must have gone through the plague and since the blood carries for seven generations, some weaknesses were born into my DNA. This resulted in weaknesses in the teeth, blood and kidneys. The toxicity from my numerous root canals in my teeth ended up in my kidneys because of the urinary weakness I inherited from my father. He was more infested from his place of living, which led to burned spots in my small intestine so that I don't properly absorb nutrients. The lymphatic weakness from my father's side gives me mucus, nasal, respiratory, lung and skin problems.

In 2001 I saw a homeopathic practitioner who used kinesiology to opine that one of the bugs in my system was a bacteria from a great-great-grandfather on my father's side from Venezuela and that my mother was from Brazil. Another story. All the psychics I have seen have such

divergent thoughts about my past. Who can I believe? She also said I was adopted at three weeks rather than the three days I was told.

People who are not adopted do not understand this intense desire to know. The mystery keeps me going.

In every cell of my body my real parents reside and added to them are my own memories: a sunny afternoon with the curtains billowing into the room when I was told I was adopted; the blooming of the morning glories clinging to the fence by our summer cottage; the unsettling feelings of following that stranger when I was four years old; the excitement when the lights dim and a hush falls over the audience just before the ballet; the sting of tears on seeing Van Gogh's "Starry Night"; the horror of finding that my father had read and burned my diary; the relief when my children were born healthy; and the day I woke from a deep sleep and admitted I was adopted.



The psychic doctor in Canada suggested I accept my adoptive father and Rebecca Hershorn, the name he had given my real mother, as my parents and draw up papers of adoption that he would sign as a witness, a sort of ritual. He said I should write to my birth mother asking her what I wanted to know:

Dear Mother,

Who are you? Why did you give me up for adoption? Was it a sudden decision or did you ever want to keep me? Were you forced to give me away? By whom? How did you feel when we were separated? Were you happy that it was all over and that you were rid of me or did you suffer? Were people cruel to you because of your situation? Did that make you mean to me? What do you look like? How was your pregnancy? Did you gain a lot of weight? When did you first feel me move? Was I an active fetus? Was there anybody who comforted you during the hard months and then the labor? Was I delivered in a hospital? When did your water break? Who took you to the hospital? How long was your labor? Did you take drugs? Was it a difficult birth? Were there problems? Did you see me when I was born? What did I look like? Did I cry a lot? Who held me for those first few precious moments of my life? Did I feel your warmth or was I left alone? Did you nurse me? Did I know you were going to give me up? Did you talk to me and tell me why? If you did I can't remember. How soon did my adoptive parents get me? Did someone bring me to them or did they come to get me? Was there any love between you and my father? Or was it a one-night stand? Was he around during your pregnancy or did you have to manage alone? Were you angry with me while I was growing inside of you? Or did you talk to me and stroke your tummy trying to make contact? Did you ever see my father after I was born? Who is he? Was he also my adoptive father? I am small like him and people said I looked like him. How could he have gone to his grave without telling me I was his daughter? Was there something awful he couldn't admit? Was it rape? Did he force himself on you? Was he a mean rotten bastard? Was it incest? Why won't anybody talk? I had to have a mother. Are you dead or alive? Are you still within reach? I would love to hug you and feel that warmth that only a mother can give. To feel your body, the one in which I

grew, next to mine. Would you be able to hug me? Could you feel warmth for me even though I was raised by another? Do you remember that day when I was born? Of course you do. It's something no mother can ever forget. Was there a moment of joy when your tummy flattened and you heard that cry of life? When did the loneliness set in? Was there anybody to share it with? Was the separation final or did you see me again? Were you ever sent any pictures of me? Do you ever think of me now? How do you feel on my birthday? Could you be Rehecca Hershorn or Isahel Thirt (Terte) or Maria Gunderson, names I have received from psychics? I know nothing. I want to know everything. I long to know.

With all my love, Your daughter, Renée



November 4, 2003: A psychic in Taos, New Mexico told me that my adoptive father was my real father (three other psychics have said the same thing). He got together with a girl of seventeen whose name was Marion or Marianne who fell madly in love with him. Because he didn't want a family scandal, nor to pay child support for the rest of his life, he arranged to take me home. I was at some type of an agency for about four months until the paperwork got arranged.

Something deep inside me felt right about that scenario and explained many things. I guess I couldn't accept this possibility when Mitra mentioned it years ago. My relationship with my father at the time was too emotionally charged. I didn't want him to be my father, real or adoptive! We were so close but his attitude and actions humiliated me. I needed more drama in those days, something more exciting to fit the fantasies I had indulged in my whole life. My birth parents weren't real and over the years they had grown to impossible proportions. But somehow I was ready to listen now. I could accept the fact that my father, just a human being, could have actually fathered me. He was always the one who took responsibility for me because I was his.

I always thought I didn't have any roots. I now realize I do; I just don't know about them. The search is the answer. You learn to face your reality and only then can you deal with it. As the years pass and another birthday comes around, the realization that I will never know, that I will never meet my real mother, settles into my soul and a familiar depression returns. My struggle doesn't stop. It's there every day of my life.

As far as being adopted is concerned ... It remains an intangible in my life. All the years I have read and written about adoptees, birth parents, the archaic system, the secrecy, I still can't touch anything solid. I understand it intellectually but it isn't a part of my reality. Even knowing that perhaps my adoptive father is my real father doesn't change things. Maybe because he never told me himself, there is always that uncertainty. It's like Alice falling down the rabbit hole. And when I feel the darkness around me, the pain of my situation creeps into my awareness and I struggle up through the layers of impossibility until realization comes: It's okay. I'm here, I'm alive, and things aren't so bad. What else is there to do except write about it? Create something tangible. What comes with being adopted is almost too much to bear. I have a

mother whom I don't know. And the circumstances around that not knowing make me feel outside of my own life.

Sometimes ...

EPILOGUE

"Not having a sense of biological roots makes it all too easy to overestimate one's adaptive capacity. People view the adoptee as free to become whatever he or she desires - and responsible for it as well. With an excessive sense of adaptability, not carrying on a family tradition, and following in no one's footsteps, the adoptee resembles a pioneer. From this position it becomes easy to try too hard - or to give up altogether. To carry on adoptive family traditions is often easier said than done; biology does not always cooperate. If one predicates an identification with the adoptive parents on disavowing one's natural parents, the resulting identification will lack substance and durability. The adoptee shares an identity with two families and cannot substitute one for the other. And two identities are, of course, harder to manage than one. While I do not know my actual heritage, I know it determines my options. Adoptees are not as adaptable as people expect." ¹

"After having begun the search, thoughts of my adoption rarely leave my mind. They color everything." ²

"Perhaps it is better to live with a dream than to seek reality and be plunged to earth." ³

"Maturity comes when we can accept the complexities and ambiguities of our situation and make them work for us, rather than against us - and go on. It comes when we can enjoy the positive side of being adopted - not being entrapped by roots as others are. When we realize that our sense of not belonging has given us the freedom to move easily from one world to another, rather than being 'nailed down to a life without escape.'" ⁴

You cannot go back and talk your parents into giving you something that they couldn't give you when you were a child. You cannot go back and talk your biological mother into receiving you. It's too late. You've already been given up for adoption. You've already been raised and conditioned in a certain way. So simply accept those feelings, those memories, and allow yourself to feel them when you feel them. And then recognize that is only a small part of your history as a conscious living being moving through many lifetimes and dimensions. And that here and now, even in this body, you have so much more to you than those aspects. That your self-worth and self-esteem are based on the fact that you are.

Because you're adopted there is a greater sense of freedom here for you to be whatever you want and to choose whatever you want to choose. Consider it a blessing. And what you don't know gives you that much more space to discover what you would like to know or think you'd like to know. When you think you know who you are, then you don't, you see, because you begin to limit yourself. All knowledge is a form of limitation.

Mitra, Psychic Reading, 1983

My life still remains a mystery to which a solution will never be found, but that aspect is balanced with the fact that I have been blessed with a supportive and loving partner and a daughter who understands the depth of my tragedy. And my life goes on ...

Black Market Baby

*black market baby, a woman on her own
how her broken heart has roamed
sweet darling, born without a home
my mama left me in the arms of another one*

*black market baby, sold after birth
don't know her country, don't know her worth
rejected before she could crawl
handed over in the streets of Montreal*

*Torn from the family tree, a gypsy heart rambling free eyes azure as wildflowers, nothing in life
is sure
she has no time or date
at whose door shall she wait*

*Oh mama, I can't hear your heartbeat, I can't hear your heartbeat ... Ah the price of freedom,
tangled in her hair Oh mama, I can't hear your heartbeat, I can't hear your heartbeat ...*

*This sordid past may have set her back, lacking the love to follow her path but rage and
sorrow and hidden street smarts, gave her the strength to follow her heart Ah the price of
freedom tangled in her hair*

Oh mama, oh mama, I can't hear your heartbeat, I can't hear your heartbeat

Love, Elizabeth
Happy Mother's Day, May 2002

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C.P.E.J. of Anglophone Montreal, 2155 Guy Street, #1010; C.P.E.J. of Center of Montreal, 1001 de Maisonneuve Blvd. (Adoption Files)

City Archives-CP 160 Succ. D, Montreal, Quebec H3K 3B9; the Association of Archivists of Quebec, CP 423 Sillery, Quebec G1T 2R5

National Personnel Records Centre, Public Archives Canada, Tunny's Pasture, Ottawa, ON K1A 0N3 (Armed Forces)

Court du Quebec Chambre de la jeunesse, 410 Bellechasse, Montreal, H3S 1X3 for Judgement of Adoption.

The Adoption Secretariat, Mme. Lise Leboeuf, 3700 Berri Street, Montreal, Quebec H2L 4G9.

Quebec Regional Office, Health and Welfare Canada, Income Security Programs, 330 rue de la Garde du Palais, Box 1816, Q.C. G1K 7L5

ALMA, Box 154, Washington Bridge Station, New York, N.Y. 10033 (Adoptees' Liberty Movement Assoc.)

Parent Finders of Canada, Box 21025, Ottawa South Postal Outlet, Ottawa, Ontario K1S 5N1

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